A CANADA FIT FOR CHILDREN

Canada's follow-up to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, dated April 2004.

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A message from the Prime Minister

The children of today constitute the largest generation of young people the world has ever known. And the world will be profoundly affected by their actions and decisions – not only in the years to come, but even right now.

Their dreams and aspirations, their energies and talent, will enormously shape the world we live in. It is absolutely in the interest of all people of the globe that the children of today grow up and develop in conditions of safety and security; and that they are nurtured and supported by their families and communities. And that means protecting them from deprivation, from want, from fear and injury – physical or emotional.

Upholding the rights, the innocence and the promise of our children is a key responsibility that all countries, all families, all communities share.

In Canada, the Government has devoted more than $13 billion to the National Children's Agenda. Most recently, as part of our ongoing efforts to strengthen Canada's social foundations, the Government has established a Canada Learning Bond to help children with their later education needs; we have accelerated the funding under the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care which means more quality child care more quickly.

I would urge everyone who reads *A Canada Fit for Children* to become engaged in its primary goal: to work together on all levels – at the national level, at the individual and community level – to construct a world in which our children can live, learn, develop as far as their potential and dreams will take them.

I congratulate all those who have participated in the development of *A Canada Fit for Children.*

The Right Honourable Paul Martin
Prime Minister of Canada

A message from the Minister of Health and the Minister of Social Development

Supporting children and families is a national priority. In Canada, we know the value of ensuring that children receive the best possible start in life. We recognize the importance of ensuring they receive the supports they need in all areas of their life so that they can become responsible citizens of our country. We also know there is a need to support other countries in an effort to improve the health and well-being of children around the world.

Following the United Nations Special Session on Children in May, 2002, Canada committed to respond with a plan of action. As the Ministers responsible for the development of *A Canada Fit for Children*, we are aware that while most children in Canada are doing well, some challenges remain. In order to address these challenges in a collaborative manner, consultations with a broad range of Canadians were held across the country. *A Canada Fit for Children* reflects the consensus on the priorities identified during the consultations and identifies opportunities for concrete action that Canadians can take to improve the lives of children in Canada and around the globe.

We encourage everyone to read *A Canada Fit for Children* and to consider the contributions they can make to realize the broad goals set out in the document. No one government, organization, individual, family or community acting alone can improve the lives of our children. Working in collaboration will be essential to our success.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to the Canadians who contributed to Canada's Plan of Action. In particular, we'd like to recognize the Honourable Senator Landon Pearson for her tireless efforts on behalf of children, and in particular, for her leadership in developing *A Canada Fit for Children*.

Pierre Pettigrew
Minister of Health
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and,
Minister responsible for Official Language

Liza Frulla
Minister of Social Development

A message from Senator Landon Pearson

The 21st Century will belong to our children and our children's children. It is their dreams and aspirations, shaped by the circumstances into which they are born and which surround them as they grow up, that will give the Century its final definition. Those who are under eighteen today constitute more than a third of the world's population and are already profoundly affecting our lives by their decisions and actions. For their sake as well as our own, we must do everything possible to reduce the suffering that weighs them down, open up their opportunities for success and ensure them a culture of respect. This is what the young people meant when they spoke to the General Assembly of the United Nations at the Special Session on Children in May 2002. "We want a world fit for children," they said, "because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone."

A Canada Fit for Children is Canada's plan of action to construct such a world. Canadians of all ages and from every sector of society have contributed their thoughts and ideas to its design. Supporting families and strengthening communities became a central theme as all of us worked together to create a cohesive strategy for improving the situation of Canada's and the world's children.

We want this document to make a real difference so we urge everyone who reads it to become engaged. We know that in Canada, in spite of the fact that the majority of children in this country are doing well, many problems remain. As for the world's children, the obstacles confronting them often seem insurmountable. Yet there is much reason for hope. I believe that as Canadians we can be proud of the common vision that has informed *A Canada Fit for Children* and optimistic that it will light our way forward to a better future for us all.

Senator Landon Pearson

A message from the young people of CEERT

Through our involvement in the process of developing *A Canada Fit for Children*, children and young people have been engaged in the rewarding and exceptional process of entrenching children's rights into Canadian society to bridge the gap between goals and realities.

The Special Session on Children set an historic precedent in May 2002 by actively involving young people in a meeting of the General Assembly. The Government of Canada led the way by bringing young people as official delegates to the regional and preparatory committee meetings for the special session held in Jamaica and New York.

Five young Canadian delegates who had attended the international meetings reunited in August 2002 and created the Child Engagement Experts Resource Team (CEERT). We, the young people of CEERT, have been involved with the development of *A Canada Fit for Children*. Children and young people across Canada have contributed their vision of what a Canada fit for children needs to look like. We have spoken as equals alongside adult counterparts who have embraced our desire and our right to participate.

The future of Canada must be shaped from its greatest asset – the children and young people of today. We have valid and unique concerns, dreams and voices. We are in possession of unparalleled views of our realities through daily experiences.

We can declare with pride that Canada's renowned commitment to children continues with the promotion of children's rights, from the adoption and ratification of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* to the support of the creation of CEERT. However, the drive for children's rights has been and must be enforced through involvement and investment.

The implementation of *A Canada Fit for Children* will directly impact our futures and the nation's future. The end result will be determined by the participation of children, facilitated by organizations and groups such as CEERT, working alongside decision-makers at all levels of society. With each promise and act, we bring ourselves one step closer to the dream: a community—, a province—, a city—, a country—, and even a world, fit for children – fit for all of us!

Alison B. — Amy R. — Candis C. — Ellen K — Giselle R.
Lisa W. — Myron W. — Nikki S. — Rebecca D. — Jacqui P.

The young people of the Child Engagement Experts Resource Team steering committee

A CANADA FIT FOR CHILDREN

I. PREFACE

1. In May 2002, more than 7,000 people from around the world gathered in New York to take part in the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children, the most important international meeting on children to be held in more than ten years. The Special Session on Children was attended by heads of state and government and other high-level delegates, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations and hundreds of boys and girls aged nine to 18. It was an opportunity for governments to join with civil society to review progress since the World Summit for Children in 1990, identify emerging issues and renew the commitment of the international community to the world's children.

2. The Special Session on Children ended with the nations of the world adopting by unanimity a declaration and plan of action called *A World Fit for Children*. Issuing from three years of intense negotiations, *A World Fit for Children* represents a remarkable worldwide consensus about strategies and actions to improve the situation of all children everywhere. *A World Fit for Children* identifies four priority areas for action: promoting healthy lives; providing quality education; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS. It contains a global plan of action, based on the best interests of the child, that describes what the nations of the world should do for and with children. All governments present at the special session committed to move forward and each agreed to prepare a national plan of action based on its own national circumstances.

3. *A Canada Fit for Children*, Canada's national plan of action, has been developed with Canadians from every sector of society and all levels of government, as well as children. It reflects what Canadians told us were the key issues affecting children and suggests opportunities for action that can be taken to improve the lives of children in Canada and in the world. It lays out a roadmap to guide Canada's collective efforts for and with children. As one element of the monitoring of progress and results, it includes examples of directional signposts and milestones for the Government of Canada. It calls for strategies that are child-centred, multi-sectoral, forward-looking and collaborative. It also signals emerging issues and identifies ways to promote and protect children's rights, including greater public awareness of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

4. *A Canada Fit for Children* contains a declaration of Canada's commitment to children, a Canadian vision for children that highlights Canadian governments' strong agenda for children, and a plan of action that reflects a consensus on goals, strategies and opportunities for action on key priorities within four central themes: supporting families and strengthening communities; promoting healthy lives; protecting from harm; and promoting education and learning.

5. In this Plan of Action, *'we'* seeks to include everyone in Canada who cares about or is responsible for children, as well as children themselves; and *'child'*, following the definition in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, means every human being under the age of 18 years.

II. DECLARATION

6. A country that believes in the future values its children. Canada is a forward-looking nation with a strong sense of responsibility. We believe that children should have the opportunity to be fully prepared to live a responsible life in a free society, in a spirit of understanding, peace, dignity, tolerance, equality and solidarity.

7. To recognize the significance of childhood and the important role children have in society, Canada's action plan reaffirms our commitment to respect the rights and ensure the well-being of all children in order to achieve a Canada and a world fit for children. Canada is committed to continuing to work to improve the life chances of children in all parts of the world through the promotion of peace, security and prosperity as well as universal education, guided in our efforts by the values Canadians cherish of respect for democracy, human rights, the rule of law, equality, diversity and the protection of the environment.

8. We are proud of our diversity in Canada. Our population is spread across a vast northern land whose regions are marked by linguistic, economic and demographic differences. According to Statistics Canada, in 2001 Canada's children comprised 24 percent of the country's population with nearly seven million under the age of 18, including just over 380 thousand Aboriginal children and 1.1 million visible minority children (of whom 30 percent were immigrants or non-permanent residents). We have large rural areas and densely populated urban centres. We share the longest undefended border in the world with a powerful southern neighbour. We are a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-faith society. We see ourselves as tolerant, inclusive and modern and acknowledge that our children are growing up in an increasing variety of family arrangements.

9. We take pride in our democratic traditions and our personal and political freedoms, as guaranteed by Canada's Constitution and the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and protected by legislation, government policies and programs. Canada is a federation comprising ten provinces and three northern territories and our Constitution provides unique roles and responsibilities for federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions. While each level of government has jurisdiction over certain subject matters, Canada is committed to a structure of co-operative federalism based on continuous dialogue. Within the federation, one province, Québec, has been recognized by the Parliament of Canada as a distinct society owing to its French-speaking majority, unique culture and civil law tradition. Canada has two official languages, English and French, and linguistic duality is part of our collective identity as Canadians. The rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada are guaranteed under the Constitution, which recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples – Indians, Métis and Inuit – with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

10. Parents (and legal guardians where designated) in Canada have the primary responsibility for the care and nurture of their children. The role of government and society with respect to children is to provide the legislative and policy framework, the institutional and organizational structures, the fiscal and other supports and services to enable families to ensure their children's healthy development. However, if families are unable to care for their children, then governments and society have a responsibility to provide support and ensure that they are cared for and protected. In Canada, we also recognize that children themselves have important contributions to make to the decisions that affect their own development, as well as that of their communities.

11. We affirm our obligation to promote and protect the human rights of all children. Canada is a State Party to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the most universally embraced human rights treaty in history. In Canada, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* has become the main instrument of reference, the essential basis for the achievement of children's rights. Canada's commitments to children are consistent with the four guiding principles of the Convention: the best interests of the child; survival and development; participation; and non-discrimination. The rights of the child, like all human rights, are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

12. Each of us can make a difference in the life of a child. So let us all commit to working together to build a Canada and a world fit for children – a world in which children are loved and respected, and where every boy and girl is able to enjoy childhood and grow up healthy, in dignity and peace.

III. TOWARD A COMMON CANADIAN VISION FOR CHILDREN

13. By taking a leading role at the World Summit for Children in 1990 and ratifying the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1991, Canada affirmed the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, including children, as the necessary foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world. Since then, Canadians have been constructing a common vision for children in Canada and in the world to reflect the priority we have accorded them.

14. After the World Summit for Children, Canada prepared and submitted to the United Nations a national plan of action for children entitled *Brighter Futures*. In 1993, by Act of Parliament, Canada designated November 20 as National Child Day, a day to celebrate children in Canada and promote awareness of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Canada has presented two periodic reports to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child with respect to our implementation of the Convention. Canada played an important role in the preparations for the 2002 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children – the follow-up meeting to the World Summit on Children – including during the negotiations for the global declaration and plan of action, *A World Fit for Children*. Canada was an active and recognized presence at the special session itself, and we are particularly proud of our support for the participation of children throughout the process.

15. In December 1997, Canada was the first country to ratify the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction* (the Landmines Convention). In June 2000, we were the first to adopt

comprehensive legislation to implement the *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court* to bring individuals to account for crimes against humanity, including children. In July 2000, we were the first country to ratify the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts*. In September 2000, Canada hosted a groundbreaking international conference on war-affected children.

16. Canada's on-going commitment to children and our implementation of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* have inspired us to act on their behalf. Our combined efforts, both in Canada and internationally, have increased our knowledge of the factors that promote the well-being of children and their families and contributed to our understanding of the relationship between the rights of the child and child development.

(1) Children's well-being in Canada: A shared responsibility

17. The well-being of children is a shared responsibility in Canadian society. While parents play the primary role in the nurture and care of their children, we recognize that families operate within the context of communities, workplaces and public institutions. The role of governments is to ensure that each of these settings function, individually and together, in ways that support families with children and children within families.

18. Under Canada's Constitution, federal, provincial and territorial governments are responsible for many areas that touch on the lives of children. It is clear that if children are to benefit cooperation among jurisdictions is essential. Federal, provincial and territorial cooperation with respect to children has been significantly enhanced over the past decade. In 1996, First Ministers established the well-being of children and families as a priority for joint action.

19. The *National Children's Agenda*, developed by the federal, provincial and territorial governments in consultation with the public, sets out a shared vision for ensuring that children in Canada have the best possible start in life and the necessary opportunities to realize their full potential. This shared vision includes four goals, for children to be: healthy (physically and emotionally); safe and secure; successful at learning; and socially engaged and responsible. The *National Children's Agenda* also identifies six potential areas for collaborative action to improve the well-being of children in Canada: enhancing early child development; supporting parents and strengthening families; improving income security for families; providing early and continuous learning experiences; promoting healthy adolescent development; and creating safe, supportive and violence-free communities. The Early Childhood Development Agreement announced by First Ministers in September 2000 was the first item to be brought forward on this agenda. Under the Agreement, investments are being made in programs and services specifically for children under six years of age and their families in four areas for action: promoting healthy pregnancy; birth and infancy; improving parenting and family supports; strengthening early childhood development, learning and care; and strengthening community supports.

(2) How children in Canada are doing

20. For the most part, children in Canada are doing well. They have access to universal health and education systems that are among the best in the world. The majority of them are born healthy and remain so. They live in caring and nurturing families and supportive community environments. The prevalence of low-income families is lower now than at any other time during the last ten years. Children enter school ready to learn and, once there, succeed. But not all children in Canada

are thriving. Aboriginal children, children with disabilities, children living in remote communities, children of single parent families, children in the welfare system, children of recent immigrants and refugee children are more likely to experience economic disadvantage with its associated risks. We also recognize that all children in Canada are potentially vulnerable at one time or another to a range of threats to their health and well-being.

21. The Government of Canada has identified population health, the maintenance and improvement of the health of the entire population and the reduction of inequities in health status among groups within the population, as the best approach for program and policy development. The population health approach extends beyond traditional health status indicators (such as illness, disability and disease) and considers the entire range of individual and collective factors and conditions – and their interactions – that have been shown to be correlated with health status. Commonly referred to as the "determinants of health," these factors currently include: income and social status; social support networks; education; employment/working conditions; social environments; physical environments; personal health practices and coping skills; healthy child development; biology and genetic endowment; health services; gender; and culture.

22. We have learned from our accumulated body of research and knowledge about children that three enabling conditions are key to healthy child development: adequate income for families with children; effective parenting within strong and cohesive families; and supportive and inclusive communities.

23. Families need to be able to provide financially for their children – not only to meet basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, but also

to offer their children the enriching experiences that nurture their talents and encourage them to engage with their peers in the healthy and stimulating activities that promote their social development and inclusion in community life. A number of factors, however, may affect the ability of families to attain financial security: lack of affordable housing; lack of access to child care; chronic health problems; low levels of parental education; and a limited job market. Ensuring that at least one parent has steady adequately paid work is clearly the most effective way to prevent and reduce poverty. However, in 2001, the unemployment rate in Canada hovered around 7.2 percent and the incidence of low income among families with children was 11.4 percent as measured by Statistics Canada's post-income tax Low-Income Cut-Offs (LICOs) that are set according to the proportion of annual income spent on basic needs, including food, shelter and clothing. The LICO indicates those families that spend a much higher share of their income on basic needs than the average family.

24. We all recognize the importance of good parenting for child development. Children will be less vulnerable to poor learning and behavioural outcomes if their parents are supportive, responsive, and consistent. We also know that, while today's parents may be under stress, they are committed to raising their children well. Furthermore, the research tells us that effective parenting can protect children from many of the risks associated with low socio-economic status, while ineffective parenting may undermine the benefits afforded by socio-economic advantage and result in poor developmental outcomes.

25. Supportive workplaces with family-friendly policies and practices, community resources and social networks all help parents to be more effective and children to do well. Communities that are safe and secure, that provide healthy and stimulating environments, and that

ensure access to programs and services make a significant contribution to the well-being of children and their families. Early learning and child care opportunities that are sensitive to language and culture are particularly important to prepare children for lifelong learning.

(3) Supporting children and their families in Canada

26. The Government of Canada in partnership with provinces, territories and other stakeholders has made many significant investments over the past decade to ensure that families have adequate income, parents are able to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and that children have access to community programs and services that foster their healthy development.

27. Canada's recent record on economic growth and job creation has helped to reduce poverty and ensure that more families have the resources they need to care for their children. In addition, the Canada Child Tax Benefit, repeatedly enhanced since its introduction in 1997, provides a tax-free monthly payment to help families with the cost of raising their children. Under the National Child Benefit (NCB) – a joint initiative with the provinces and territories introduced in 1998 – the Government of Canada provides income benefits for low-income families to reduce the depth of child poverty and promote parents' attachment to the workforce. As their contribution to the NCB initiative, provinces, territories and First Nations reinvest in benefits and services to support low-income families with children in areas such as child care, child benefits and income supplements, early childhood services, supplementary health benefits including dental benefits and other preventative services. Other measures that assist families with children include the Goods and Services / Harmonized Sales Tax Credit, the Child Care Expense Deduction, the Canada

Education Savings Grant program, the Canada Student Loan Program and the Education Tax Credit.

28. In recognition of the extraordinary costs faced by the families of children with severe disabilities, the Government of Canada has enhanced a number of tax measures and programs, including the Disability Tax Credit and Supplement, the Medical Expenses Tax Credit, the Child Care Expense Deduction for children with disabilities, the Registered Retirement Program/Registered Retirement Income Fund Rollovers for an Infirm Child, Canada Study Grants for Students with Disabilities and introduced a new Child Disability Benefit for low and modest income families in 2003.

29. The Government of Canada has introduced a range of measures to provide other supports to parents as their children's primary caregivers. In 2000, maternity and parental benefits offered under the Employment Insurance program were extended for up to one year to allow parents to stay at home and care for their newborn or newly adopted child. Under the Early Childhood Development Agreement, the Government of Canada is transferring funds each year to provincial and territorial governments to improve and expand early childhood development programs and services. In 2003, the Government of Canada committed to improve access to affordable, quality, provincially/territorially regulated early learning and child care programs through the Multilateral Framework Agreement on Early Learning and Child Care. As announced in the 2004 Budget, the Government of Canada will provide additional funding to provinces/territories under the existing Multilateral Framework in 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, which means more quality child care more quickly.

30. In Canada we value our universally accessible system of primary and secondary education. Education is a provincial and territorial responsibility, except in the case of status Indian children living on reserve. In this instance, the federal government has responsibility for education and consequently provides funding to First Nations who administer school programs on reserve or arrange for their students to attend provincial schools.

31. In 2002, the Government of Canada introduced the Child-Centred Family Justice Strategy to help parents focus on the needs of their children following separation and divorce and minimize problems by providing parents with tools to assist them in reaching parenting arrangements that are in the best interests of their child or children. This strategy builds on the new child support measures that came into force in 1997, which included federal child support guidelines and additional federal enforcement measures to help the provinces and territories ensure that family support obligations are respected.

32. The Government of Canada continues to support a range of targeted community-based programs that serve children and their parents, such as the Community Action Program for Children, the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program and the Aboriginal Head Start program. These programs and services enable families and communities to promote the health and social development of children and families living in conditions of risk. In addition, through the Family Violence Initiative, a wide array of prevention and intervention approaches have been developed to better protect children and their families.

33. Across Canada, the well-being of children and their families is a priority for action in all jurisdictions. Most provincial and territorial governments have begun to explore ways to address the multi-faceted, intersectoral nature of issues affecting children and their

families. Provinces such as Alberta, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Ontario and Québec have designated particular ministries for children and/or families. In 1996, the Province of Nova Scotia established the Child and Youth Action Committee (CAYAC) as a means for provincial ministries that share responsibility for services to children and youth to coordinate policy development. In 2000, Manitoba established a similar senior-level committee, called the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, and it signals healthy child and adolescent development as a top-level policy priority. Some other examples include Prince Edward Island, which created a Children's Secretariat to support the Premier's Council on Healthy Child Development, and Nunavut, which created the Children First Secretariat, an inter-departmental committee of Deputy Ministers. Finally, Québec invests significant resources in an integrated approach toward family and childhood services, which strives to foster child development and equality of opportunity. It gives special weight to early intervention, including through family income support measures and early learning and child care programs (such as early childhood centres and after-school care services at minimal cost).

34. A number of provincial governments have also appointed advocates for children and youth and, although the mandate of the advocates differ, they have come together in the Canadian Council of Provincial Child and Youth Advocates to share their common commitment to further the voice, rights and dignity of children. This council includes five provincially appointed Children's Advocates (in Alberta, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and Saskatchewan); the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman, Children's Section; the *Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse du Québec*; and the British Columbia Child and Youth Officer. Broadly speaking, Children's Advocates have the authority to become involved in the

following activities: to ensure that the rights of children and youth are respected and valued in our communities and in government practice, policy and legislation; to promote the interests of, and act as a voice for, children who have concerns about provincial government services; to engage in public education; to resolve disputes, and conduct independent investigations; and to recommend improvements in programs for children to the government and/or the legislative assembly.

(4) Supporting the health of children in Canada

35. The responsibility of governments to protect our health is a key component of Canada's social contract. Public health, defined as the organized efforts of society to protect, promote and restore the health of the entire population, has three main functions: disease and injury prevention and control; protection from health threats; and health promotion. Canada's public health efforts include programming and services related to communicable (infectious) and non-communicable (chronic) diseases; injuries; threats to health such as environmental toxins; poor nutrition; pollutants; and the safety of food and blood supplies. Canada's current efforts have focused on individual threats to health such as specific diseases or conditions like diabetes and the promotion of protective factors such as healthy living. Children are a key population for public health efforts.

36. In addition to public health, Canada provides a publicly financed health care system through 13 interlocking provincial and territorial health insurance plans which adhere to national principles set at the federal level: public administration, comprehensiveness, universality, portability and accessibility. The aim of this system is to ensure that all insured residents of Canada, including children, have reasonable access to a range of medically necessary goods and services.

unimpeded by financial or other barriers. The Government of Canada's Non-Insured Health Benefits program provides registered Indians and recognized Inuit (regardless of residency) with medically necessary goods and services that supplement benefits provided through other private or provincial/territorial programs. In February 2003, federal, provincial and territorial governments committed to accelerate primary health care reform so that all citizens, including children, receive comprehensive primary health care services. A Health Reform Fund was created to support provincial and territorial renewal efforts and will transfer funds to provinces and territories over five years to address the priorities of primary health care reform, home care and catastrophic drug coverage. This is in addition to the Primary Health Care Transition Fund created by the Government of Canada in 2000 to support primary health care renewal at both provincial/territorial and federal levels for all age groups.

37. The Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers of Health agreed in September 2002 to work together on an Integrated Pan-Canadian Healthy Living Strategy. The initial areas of emphasis for the Strategy are physical activity and healthy eating and the relationship of both to healthy weights. Each year in Canada, more than three-quarters of deaths result from four groups of non-communicable diseases: cardiovascular, cancer, diabetes, and respiratory. Risk factors that lead to these diseases, such as physical inactivity and unhealthy eating, are growing, particularly among some vulnerable groups. The Healthy Living Strategy is aimed at reducing non-communicable diseases by addressing their common risk factors and the underlying conditions in society that contribute to them. Consistent with this focus on healthy living, the Canadian Sport Policy was endorsed in April 2002 by federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for sport. It aims to have a dynamic and leading-edge sport environment that

enables all Canadians to experience and enjoy involvement in sport to the extent of their abilities and interests and, for increasing numbers, to perform consistently and successfully at the highest competitive levels. Further, Canada signed the *Framework Convention on Tobacco Control* on July 15, 2003. This is the first public health treaty developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and it sets out government obligations to address tobacco control issues including those that affect youth.

38. In an effort to protect children from health and environmental risks and contaminants, the Government of Canada regulates and strengthens health and environmental protection, through such measures as the *Pest Control Products Act* and the *Canadian Environment Protection Act*. Protective measures also include toy safety and allergy alerts, food and drug controls, and safety regulations in areas under federal control.

(5) Promoting healthy, safe and supportive communities

39. All sectors of Canadian society are working together to ensure our children and their families reap the benefits of a safer society through healthy and supportive communities. The National Crime Prevention Strategy, introduced in 1998, supports communities in developing innovative, grass-root approaches to preventing crime and reducing victimization through collaboration at all levels of government and communities. It places particular emphasis on children and youth at-risk, Aboriginal peoples and the personal security of women.

40. The Government of Canada is committed to working collaboratively with the provinces and territories to improve the youth justice system. The Youth Justice Renewal Initiative, announced in May 1998, led to the enactment of comprehensive new laws.

41. Launched in 1999, the National Homelessness Initiative, which includes the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative, Youth Homelessness Strategy, and research, is helping to meet the emergency and basic needs of the homeless population, as well as some transitional and supportive housing needs. In partnership with the provinces and territories, the Government of Canada also launched the Affordable Housing Initiative in 2001 to improve the affordability and supply of rental housing, especially in urban centres.

42. Federal, provincial and territorial governments work together with their partners, both nationally and internationally, to protect children from parental abductions and have them returned promptly. Canada's Our Missing Children program and the National Missing Children's Service provide broad support to parents and police.

43. In 2002, the Government of Canada introduced amendments to the Canadian *Criminal Code* to better protect children from abuse and exploitation. These amendments will strengthen child pornography provisions, protect children against sexually exploitative relationships and increase maximum sentences for child-related offences. In the 2004 Budget, the Government of Canada announced new funding to launch a National Strategy to counter sexual exploitation of children on the Internet.

(6) Improving the well-being of Aboriginal children and their families

44. The Government of Canada is working together with Aboriginal communities, leaders and Elders, as well as provincial and territorial governments to improve the health and well-being of Aboriginal children and their families (First Nations on and off reserve, Métis, non-status Indians and Inuit). While all governments in Canada are responsible for the health of their youngest citizens, the federal

government has a primary although not an exclusive responsibility for the health of First Nations children on reserves and Inuit children. The Government of Canada reiterated its commitment to ensuring Aboriginal children get a better start in life in the 2004 Speech from the Throne. The 2004 Budget announced a further investment in early learning and child care for First Nations children living on reserves, in addition to the increased investment announced in the 2003 Budget.

45. Since 1998, under the First Nations National Child Benefit Reinvestment initiative, First Nations have been reinvesting social assistance savings in programs and services for low-income families with children in such areas as child care, nutrition, early childhood development, employment and training supports, and community enrichment. In 1998, the Government of Canada launched an Education Reform Initiative in partnership with First Nations stakeholders and communities, to strengthen management and governance capacity, improve the quality of classroom instruction, increase parental and community involvement, and support school-to-work transitions.

46. The Federal Strategy on Early Childhood Development for First Nations and other Aboriginal Children, announced in October 2002, complements the September 2000 Early Childhood Development Agreement. The strategy seeks to improve existing programs and services, including Aboriginal Head Start, First Nations and Inuit Child Care, and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) prevention and supports, with a particular focus on children on reserves. The 2003 Budget announced funding to improve early learning and child care programs for Aboriginal children, primarily for those living on reserve. This funding will complement the federal transfer to provinces and territories in support of the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning

and Child Care. The Government of Canada supports the delivery of culturally appropriate, First Nations-managed child welfare services. In 2000, together with the Assembly of First Nations and First Nations child and family service agencies, the Government of Canada completed a national policy review of First Nations Child and Family Services that is expected to result in significant improvements to the system. In addition, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, introduced in 1998 and further extended in the Budget 2003, is supporting pilot projects to explore new ways to better meet the needs of urban Aboriginal peoples, including children and their families. It also provides for additional funding to address critical issues such as the high turnover of teachers in some First Nations schools and the need to support families' involvement in the education of First Nations children.

(7) Building on what we know

47. Canada's efforts to support children and families are based on a strong body of evidence for what works best. Continued investments in research, monitoring and knowledge development are allowing Canadians to track progress and to monitor how children in Canada are doing. Initiatives such as the Canadian Hospitals Injury and Prevention Program, the Centres for Excellence for Children's Well-being, the Health Behaviours in School-Aged Children Survey, the Canadian Perinatal Surveillance System, the Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program, the Participation and Activity Limitation Survey, the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, the Enhanced Surveillance of Canadian Street Youth System, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY), New Canadian Children and Youth Survey, the Aboriginal Peoples Survey, Aboriginal Children's Survey, the Social Development Partnerships Program, and the international Child Protection Research Fund

combine quantitative and qualitative knowledge development from surveys and statistics with community-based research and the collection and sharing of best practices. In addition, in the 2004 Budget, the Government of Canada announced a significant expansion of the Understanding the Early Years (UEY) initiative which will enable communities to make informed decisions about the best policies and most appropriate programs for young children and their parents.

48. Actions taken for children in the last ten years have provided Canada with a range of experiences that demonstrate which interventions are most effective and indicate how government action can best be structured for children. We have learned that effective action for children requires heightened coordination within and across governments and with other partners and stakeholders. We have also learned from the research cited above that strong, broad-based social investments, coupled with an additional focus on prevention among children most at risk, can improve the well-being of children and offset the effects of disadvantage. By combining universally available programs with more targeted initiatives, governments and their partners can reach all children and families, directing special attention to those who are in greatest need.

(8) Supporting the world's children

49. At the global level, the 1990s was a decade of great promise and modest achievement for the world's children. On the positive side, the World Summit for Children and the entry into force of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* helped to accord political priority to children. International legal provisions and mechanisms emerged to strengthen the protection of children. Regional commitments were made. Pursuit of the World Summit for Children goals was rigorously

monitored in the 1990s and led to many tangible results for children: fewer children are now dying of preventable diseases; polio has been brought to the brink of eradication; and, through salt iodization, 90 million newborns are protected every year from a significant loss of learning ability.

50. Yet critical challenges remain. More than 10 million children still die each year from preventable causes; 121 million children are still out of school (54 percent of whom are girls); 150 million children are suffering from hunger and malnutrition; and HIV/AIDS is spreading rapidly. Persistent poverty, armed conflict, debt burdens and threats to health and social security lead to inadequate investments in social services. Many children are discriminated against and do not benefit from existing resources and social services. Children are also often excluded from participating in decision-making that directly affects them. Moreover, harmful and exploitative labour, the sale and trafficking of children and young people and other forms of abuse, exploitation and violence cont[illegible] to be prevalent.

51. To help address these global challenges, Canada has committed to bolstering and strengthening its official development assistance in four priority areas of social development. The action plans for basic education, health and nutrition, and HIV/AIDS include a focus on children, while the action plan on child protection specifically addresses the rights of children in need of special protection from exploitation, abuse and discrimination.

52. The experience of the past decade has confirmed that the needs and rights of children must be a global priority in all development efforts. There are many key lessons: change is possible – and children's rights are an effective rallying point; policies must address both the

immediate factors affecting or excluding groups of children and the wider and deeper causes of inadequate protection and rights violations; targeted interventions that achieve rapid successes need to be pursued, with due attention to sustainability and participatory processes; and efforts should build on children's own resilience and strength. Multi-sectoral programs focusing on early childhood and support to families, especially in high-risk conditions, merit special support because they provide lasting benefits for child growth, development and protection.

IV. PLAN OF ACTION

53. No one government, organization or individual alone can effectively address the broad range of issues affecting children today. *A Canada Fit for Children* was developed in close collaboration with a wide array of partners and reflects a consensus on a range of priority areas for children. Throughout the consultation process certain shared principles, priorities and strategies for action emerged. As a result, the action plan offers a collective vision for moving forward to create a Canada and a world fit for children. It is a call to action, identifying strategies that everyone in Canada can contribute to in different ways and at different times, and inviting all sectors of Canadian society — governments, organizations and individuals including children — to take it forward as a common task.

A. Creating a Canada and a World Fit for Children

54. "We want a world fit for children, because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone", said the children when they spoke to the General Assembly at the Special Session on Children. And then they reminded us that we are all responsible for creating it. Everyone recognizes that families, neighbourhoods, schools, the media, peer groups and the wider community influence the lives of children, but so do government policies and programs, the work environment of parents and caregivers, the physical characteristics, and the social climate of the communities in which children are growing up, including the broader culture that surrounds them. Everyone is implicated in shaping the world for children whether or not we are conscious of what we are doing. So for our sake as well as theirs, everyone must work together to improve our world. We also recognize that this is a two-way process. Not only are children greatly affected by the

multiple environments in which they grow up, but they can also be powerful agents of social and cultural change. We in Canada recognize the importance of participation of children to their own healthy development, as well as to the development of the communities in which they live and to society at large.

55. We commit to implementing the Plan of Action according to the following principles based on Canadian values:

Recognition that parents (and legal guardians where designated) have the primary responsibility for the care and nurture of children

56. Families are the natural environment for the care and nurture of children. It is within the family environment that children spend much of their time and where a significant portion of their development occurs. Families, in turn, are strongly influenced by the physical, social and cultural environments in which they live. This Plan of Action recognizes that strong relationships must exist among children and parents, legal guardians, other family members, direct caregivers and community members to ensure the healthy development of children.

Recognition of governments' roles and responsibilities

57. The protection of children is fundamental to the Plan of Action. All governments in Canada are determined to protect children from harm, securing their healthy development and well-being and respecting both their dignity and their resilience. While parents have the primary responsibility for the protection, care and nurture of their children, a responsibility which governments support, there are cases when families break down or are unable to function, and thus society — through the power it has delegated to government — must act, maintaining the best interests of the child as a primary consideration.

As a society, we share a collective responsibility for the safety and security of all children, and must work together to model and promote a culture of respect.

Respect for the diversity of children's communities, culture and background

58. Children in Canada come from a variety of backgrounds, communities and experiences. Many of them are first or second generation immigrants from every corner of the globe. They speak many languages, enjoy diverse cultures and traditions, and live in a range of settings from busy urban centres to remote rural or Northern communities. We recognize the specific circumstances of Aboriginal children and accept the obligation to work with Aboriginal communities to develop and implement culturally relevant strategies to care for, protect and promote the rights of their children, ensuring that they remain connected to their culture. Our international work for and with children requires the same degree of sensitivity. Building a world fit for children can only be done if we recognize the inherent dignity of each and every child.

Ensuring social inclusion

59. All children must be provided with opportunities that enable their full participation in society. Experiences of discrimination can have a serious negative impact on the health and well-being of children. No child should be excluded on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, sexual orientation, birth or other status. Social inclusion is one of the primary and most effective vehicles for addressing the rights of all children. It is important to create inclusive, flexible and responsive systems that strive to

reduce disparity, promote diversity and enhance awareness of social inclusion for all children.

Participation of children

60. Children who are capable of forming their own views have the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. The active involvement of children in decision-making expands the diversity of perspectives reflected in the process, and contributes to more relevant and equitable policies and programming including more sustainable outcomes. Meaningful child participation increases children's capacity for responsible citizenship and their respect for democratic principles.

Fostering multi-sectoral collaboration

61. The interrelated nature and indivisibility of children's rights demand holistic, multi-faceted and cross-jurisdictional responses. Providing adequate and effective supports to children requires the continued commitment of all sectors of society, including the public, non-governmental and private sectors.

Sharing research, information and best practices

62. Research plays an essential role, not only in finding new solutions, but also in determining the nature of the challenge and measuring progress toward goals. Much work has been done in Canada and in other nations to study, analyze and review the situation and needs of children. We in Canada recognize the importance of expanding our knowledge to ensure that our decisions are evidence-based.

Recognizing and acting on responsibilities for all the world's children

63. While we are working together for children in Canada, we recognize that children internationally, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition, are also a priority. Challenges such as poverty, hunger, disease, natural disasters, armed conflict and terrorism remain the biggest obstacles to realizing the rights of children worldwide. Canada's foreign policy and particularly our official development assistance, as well as the work of many Canadian non-governmental organizations, all play important roles in building a world fit for children. The private sector also has a responsibility, especially in countries in which a company does business.

B. Goals, Strategies and Actions for Canada

64. Although *A Canada Fit for Children* is based on *A World Fit for Children*, the themes of the latter have been rearranged into the following four categories to reflect the priorities that Canadians identified during the consultative process: supporting families and strengthening communities; promoting healthy lives; protecting from harm; and promoting education and learning.

1. Supporting Families and Strengthening Communities

65. Canadians recognize that strong families and communities are crucial to the well-being of children. All of society benefits when parents are supported in their ability to give their children the best possible start in life. But parents are often placed under stress by the need to keep pace with the modern knowledge economy and by the numerous other demands on their time and energy. Since the communities in which children live, play and learn also influence the quality of childhood, it is important that they are safe and secure, and provide a variety of easily accessible programs and services for families with

children. The unique role of friends and neighbours needs to be recognized and valued.

Priorities for action

(a) Child- and family-friendly policies

66. Policies within the workplace, the community and the larger social environment structure our daily lives as citizens. Understanding the way in which children and families are affected by the policies we design and implement is crucial. Policies that are child- and family-friendly are defined by their ability to support children and families where they live, learn, play and work. Such policies provide opportunities for social inclusion and participation in community life.

67. In our actions, we will foster and promote the capacity of children and adults to work together in meaningful partnerships. Child-friendly policies will recognize the expertise and unique understanding that children have, about both their local environments and global issues. We will strive to ensure the effectiveness of awareness campaigns directed at girls, boys and adolescents by ensuring that they are accessible, inclusive, age appropriate and made available in child-friendly format. As part of our shared responsibility to raise healthy children and promote and support families, we will continue to work together to build a child-friendly and family-enabling society by developing policy initiatives that are culturally rooted, collaborative and accountable.

(b) Early learning and child care

68. Every child deserves a healthy start in life. Early childhood to age six is a critical period for child growth and development. Research has shown that quality early learning and child care has a positive impact

on child outcomes. A comprehensive system of early learning and child care programs based on principles of inclusion, affordability, accessibility, quality and parental choice can provide the positive stimulation and nurturing in the early years that lay the foundation for learning, health and behaviour throughout a person's life.

69. We have already made progress in improving access to affordable, quality and regulated early learning and child care programs. Conscious of populations with special needs such as children with disabilities or children living in rural and remote areas, we will strive to ensure that a wide array of opportunities for early learning and child care is available for every child by working together with families, community-based organizations, businesses and labour.

(c) Poverty

70. Nobody should have to live in poverty, especially a child. The consequences of growing up in poverty can follow children throughout their lives. It can contribute to poor developmental outcomes and social exclusion. It is often associated with inadequate nutrition, poor physical and mental health, and problems in learning. The neighbourhoods in which children whose families are poor live are often run-down and unsafe.

71. While significant efforts have been made to address poverty in Canada, we need to continue to work to ensure that all children have a good start in life. Income security and the health and well-being of children are central to the kind of society we want. We must never lose sight of the goals of supporting families in their efforts to secure work, find affordable housing, access health care and pursue learning opportunities.

72. We will continue to work together to provide a broad spectrum of supports to parents and families in order to improve the circumstances of children. Each sector has its own unique role to play in addressing poverty and by working together we can build on past achievements. Through sharing information on programs, services and supports for families we can identify what works to help them out of poverty and create prosperous communities. We will pay special attention to those who are in greatest need including Aboriginal families, immigrants and refugees, children with disabilities, children whose families have come apart, and children who are living on the streets.

(d) Separation and divorce

73. Families that are breaking up require special supports. Separation and divorce are stressful transitions that can have a profound effect on the health and well-being of children. Many couples manage reasonably well and keep the best interests of their children in mind but some will need support to deal with their anger and grief, as well as assistance to cope with conflicts, communicate with their former partner and work out child-focused parenting arrangements.

74. The family justice system responds, in part, to the challenge of family break-up. Making it as child-friendly and inclusive as possible, with the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child, is important in order to ease the stress children and families often face. The collaborative efforts of many partners will be necessary to render the family justice system less adversarial and more child-centred. We will continue to work to provide separating and divorcing couples with the support and the tools they need to assist them in reaching parenting arrangements that are in the children's best interests.

75. Parental child abduction occurs when a parent unilaterally removes and/or prevents a child from returning to a parent with lawful rights of care and control. This can include situations where a child is taken to a foreign country without joint parental consent. Separation and divorce are often contributing factors. Parental child abduction is a form of abuse from which children can suffer emotionally and psychologically.

76. Partners, both nationally and internationally, will continue to work together to protect children from parental abductions and have them returned promptly. Where appropriate, we will continue to apply the Canadian *Criminal Code*, which recognizes child abduction as a serious crime. We will continue to promote internationally the *Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction* (the Hague Convention) which Canada ratified in 1983, as well as encourage non-Hague Convention states to comply with related obligations under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and other multilateral treaties they have ratified.

(e) Social inclusion and diversity: Building community

77. Respect for diversity and active civic participation are core Canadian values. Yet some children, young people and adults, such as members of ethnic and racialized groups and various religious faiths, those with disabilities, immigrants and refugee children, Aboriginal peoples, children who are living on the streets, members of official language minority communities, or people living in the North or other remote areas, may experience barriers to full participation in society. Barriers may also exist based on gender or sexual orientation. These barriers can prevent parents, families and legal guardians from providing a balanced, integrated life for their children. Barriers may also prevent children and young people from sharing their opinions and fully participating in the creation of a Canada that responds equitably to all.

78. We recognize that all children in Canada have the right to participate and contribute, in accordance with their abilities, as valued and respected members of communities and society as a whole. As a multitude of experiences contribute to Canada's diverse fabric, it is important that legislation, policy, services and activities are sensitive to the barriers that can affect children, young people and their families.

79. Children have much to contribute. Indeed, awareness of, and concern for the unique and, in many cases, multiple barriers faced by some children in Canada will build a more inclusive society by diminishing the perception that one approach can fit everyone. The development of participatory processes and partnerships between those who make decisions and those who are affected by them may also facilitate an increased sensitivity toward unintended barriers that affect children. Committed to engaging citizens in decisions that affect them, we will strive to ensure that children have the opportunity to participate in civic life to their full potential and that Canada is a society in which all children feel they belong.

(f) Aboriginal children

80. Although there have been improvements in the health and well-being of Aboriginal children in Canada over the years, it is clear that significant challenges remain. Improving the situation of Aboriginal children (First Nations living on and off reserve, Métis, non-status Indians and Inuit) consistently ranked among the highest priorities Canadians identified as this national plan of action was being prepared. Many Aboriginal children live in poverty and have poor physical and mental health. As a group, they are over-represented in the child welfare and youth justice systems. Far too many living on reserve are in substandard and crowded housing and have difficulties

accessing health, social and educational services; and their parents have higher unemployment rates. Inuit children living in Canada's northern communities experience many problems including high suicide rates. They also face isolation and greater distances to access services and support – conditions and circumstances they share with children living in other remote areas of Canada. Aboriginal children living in urban centres frequently face marginalization in mainstream school systems and may live with their families in inadequate housing. Culturally appropriate care and services for Métis children are underdeveloped.

81. Aboriginal communities (including urban, rural and remote northern communities) are integral to the social fabric of Canada. Partners will strive to ensure that Aboriginal children are provided with opportunities to flourish. We will move toward closing the gap between Aboriginal children and others in Canada. This includes building on our commitment to address the gap in life chances and health status between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children, working to strengthen preventative measures to curb the number of Aboriginal children coming into the child welfare system, and working with provinces and territories, Aboriginal leaders, and communities to improve education outcomes for children.

82. Together, we will strive to build supportive environments to improve the healthy development of Aboriginal children through safe, affordable housing, access to quality and culturally specific health services, child care and schools, as well as improved supports for parents, families and communities. We will continue to promote and support the health and early learning of Aboriginal children through early childhood development and head start initiatives, and will work toward effective learning systems that respect the unique

cultural identities of Aboriginal children. We will also continue to work together toward culturally appropriate child welfare supports to improve the well-being of Aboriginal children, young people and families. Community-driven, integrated approaches to improve the well-being of Aboriginal children will be crucial to our progress. Continued efforts should be directed toward the development of partnerships and coordination among all sectors to promote and support indigenous, holistic responses.

(g) Inclusion and support of children with disabilities

83. Canadians believe that children with disabilities should have equity of access to programs and services that allow them to reach their full potential and participate as they wish in society, along with other Canadian children and young people. Canadians also recognize the particular challenges faced by parents of children with disabilities and the extra supports they may require.

84. To reach this goal we in Canada must ensure that children with disabilities are presented with a wide range of opportunities for participation in society. We will support measures that allow for the inclusion of children with disabilities so they can interact alongside their peers and increase access to integrated, quality learning and recreational programs. We will expand the knowledge base on children with disabilities to identify ways to further support inclusion in Canadian communities. Ensuring that parents and other caregivers have the support they need to care for their children, and have the necessary tools to create inclusive environments, we will foster and promote strong community capacity to support children with disabilities and their families. In recognition of the extra costs faced by some families with children with disabilities, we will strive to provide a range of supports to help meet the needs of the child and the family.

(h) Poverty and sustainable development: An international priority

85. Poverty in the developing world reduces life choices for many children. Poverty impedes their chances of acquiring the skills, capacities and confidence they need to reach their full potential. Many are denied their rights related to education, health and nutrition, and to participation, as well as to freedom from abuse, exploitation and discrimination. Investing in the world's children is crucial to breaking the cycle of poverty and achieving equitable and sustainable human development.

86. We in Canada are committed to a sustained reduction both in the number of children and families living in poverty in developing countries, and in the extent of their deprivation. Using a multi-faceted approach we will support locally owned national poverty reduction strategies in close coordination with the international donor community in order to encourage equitable economic growth and improved standards of living for poor children, their families and communities. This work will involve our continued investments in social development with a focus on children, including measures for children in need of special protection from abuse, exploitation and discrimination. We will also seek to improve the environmental conditions of people living in poverty and to ensure the environmental sustainability of poverty reduction efforts so that they benefit both present and future generations of children. Encouraging the participation of children living in poverty and that of their families and communities in decision-making will enhance respect for democratic principles and human rights, including the rights of the child. By promoting good governance and by strengthening civil society we will help to build the capacity of individuals, communities and institutions in developing countries to sustain their own social

and economic progress. As an integral part of all our poverty reduction policies, programs and projects, we will support the achievement of equality between men and women and between girls and boys.

2. Promoting Healthy Lives

87. We in Canada are committed to promoting and maintaining the physical and mental health of all children in Canada. We recognize that healthy living includes participation in society and in activities, such as arts and culture, as well as engagement in healthy physical practices. We will aim to reduce inequities in health status among different groups of children, and will take action on the factors and conditions that have been shown to influence the health of populations. Gender considerations will be addressed in our work on children's health to ensure that the distinct issues of boys and girls are taken into consideration in policies and programs.

Priorities for action

(a) Healthy active living

88. Healthy eating and physical activity play a fundamental role in promoting healthy growth and development and reducing the risk of chronic disease. By creating supportive environments and encouraging informed choices, children in Canada can establish patterns for healthy living that they will carry into adulthood. Physical activity, sports and recreation programs provide considerable physical benefits for children and can also serve as tools to teach important values and life skills including self-confidence, teamwork, communication, inclusion, discipline, respect and fair play.

89. We in Canada will promote and support physical and mental health among children through sports, physical activity, healthy eating and good nutrition, play, recreation, and opportunities for artistic and cultural expression. We will create supportive social and physical environments that enable young Canadians to make informed choices about healthy eating and physical activity. Efforts will also be made to provide adequate facilities for physical, recreational, artistic and cultural activities. We will encourage the availability of sufficient nutritious and safe foods, and strive to ensure access to safe and affordable physical activity opportunities. We will continue to be leaders in focusing on healthy eating, physical activity and their relationship to healthy body weight.

90. We will address low activity levels of children by increasing opportunities for physical activity and play and by creating more positive experiences around physical activity and sports. We will remind parents, teachers and children of the simplicity and power of play and encourage families to be active together. We will increase participation in sports by promoting opportunities for children to engage in sport and physical activity in the school setting, as well as by enhancing collaboration among sport organizations.

91. Partners will continue to ensure that nutrition considerations are integrated into health, education, agriculture, social and economic policies and programs. Canada will continue to promote the nutritional health and well-being of Canadians by collaboratively defining, promoting and implementing evidence-based nutrition policies and standards, including nutrition recommendations and dietary guidelines for general populations and specific life stages, such as Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Collaboration between partners will continue to inform nutrition programs and policies.

(b) Effective parenting

92. Good parenting skills, a cohesive family unit and parents who are mentally healthy all contribute to a family environment that increases the personal resources and coping skills of children, and reduces their vulnerability to poor developmental outcomes. Positive stimulation and nurturing in the early years lay the foundation for physical and mental health, social, spiritual and moral development, learning and behaviour.

93. We in Canada recognize that many parents and other caregivers have expressed the need for more knowledge with respect to child development and child rearing. We will offer them opportunities to develop the confidence and acquire the skills and knowledge they seek. We will continue to promote positive and effective parenting throughout the developmental continuum. We will also inform young people about healthy development and parenting-related issues to increase understanding and better prepare them to be parents. We will support the development of culturally appropriate and diversity-sensitive approaches that recognize the uniqueness of families. We will also provide a range of supports for pregnant women, new parents, infants and care providers to help meet their needs during the prenatal, birth and infancy periods.

(c) Mental health

94. A significant number of children in Canada have mental health issues that are serious enough to warrant clinical intervention. While some of these problems have physiological roots, family, school and community environments also have a profound influence. All children face challenges in their psychosocial development but most of them are surmountable problems that, in fact, help them to grow. However,

if there are too many problems at once or if they are not resolved, then the child may find it difficult to adjust and become prone to dysfunctional relationships and to making unhealthy choices.

95. All children benefit from opportunities to experience success, to make constructive choices, to understand emotions, and to share thoughts and feelings safely with one another and with adults. We in Canada will create and maintain the conditions that promote the mental health of children, young people and their families, and will strive to prevent or minimize the adverse consequences of emotional problems and mental illness. Depression in children is a growing concern. The suicide of young people, which is occurring too frequently in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities, is the ultimate tragedy; every effort must be made to prevent it.

96. We will make the promotion of mental and emotional health a key element of health promotion and protection strategies. We will recognize the interdependence of the generations and the critical role of community and family. We will raise awareness of the interactions between mental health and other pressing health and social issues, including gender, poverty and isolation. We will also promote understanding of healthy psychosocial development, respect the rights and dignity of persons experiencing emotional problems and mental illness, and reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues.

(d) Immunization

97. Vaccine-preventable diseases were at one time the major cause of morbidity and mortality in Canada, particularly in children. While these diseases are mostly under control in this country, there are still too many cases of severe, preventable illness and death. Globally, vaccine-preventable diseases are a major problem and the risk of importation

or reintroduction to Canada remains a constant threat. We in Canada should be vigilant and responsive in our approaches to immunization. National collaboration on immunization issues is critical. Those who care for children must become informed about vaccines and their importance in protecting children from preventable illness and death.

98. We will work together to improve the safety and effectiveness of immunization programs in Canada. We will strengthen key infrastructures and programs that address immunization issues such as vaccine safety, surveillance of vaccine preventable disease and immunization coverage, research and professional and public education. Partners will continue to work to enhance the vaccine procurement process in Canada.

99. We will improve the monitoring and control of vaccine preventable diseases and the security of the vaccine supply. We will work to identify appropriate processes to address the variable access between jurisdictions to new, publicly funded vaccines. We will also address vaccine issues with, and for special populations (such as Aboriginal children, immigrants, refugees and travellers). We will expand information on which policy decisions are made and promote the best information possible about the safety and importance of vaccines.

(e) The physical environment and the prevention of injuries

100. Natural and constructed environments play a crucial role in the healthy growth and development of children. The physical environment within which children live includes the air they breathe, the water they drink, the food they eat, the products they use and the settings in which they live, learn and play. Children are particularly vulnerable to environmental contaminants and questionable consumer products due to their unique physiology, behaviours and

exposures. Injuries are the leading cause of death and a significant cause of hospitalization, impairment and disability for children in Canada. Protecting children from the hazards in the natural as well as the constructed environments in which they live and grow yields tremendous benefits for Canada and the world.

101. We believe that children should live in safe, affordable housing, have access to healthy child care and learning environments, and be part of safe, healthy and caring communities. Partners will continue to regulate and strengthen health and environmental protection. We will strive to protect infants and children from health and environmental risks and contaminants in products, air, food, soil and water. We in Canada will support transportation strategies that encourage citizens to walk, bike and use public transport to enhance their health and protect our environment. We will perform risk assessments that address the unique vulnerabilities of children, conduct and act on research regarding exposures to environmental contaminants and their effects, as well as support the development of strategies that protect the environmental health of children.

(f) Sexual and reproductive health

102. Girls, boys and adolescents in Canada need to acquire the capacity to manage the range of sexual health issues they encounter as they are growing up in our complex contemporary society. Sexually transmitted infections (STI), including Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), affect a disproportionate number of young people in Canada and worldwide. It is important that children form positive personal identities at a young age, learn to respect themselves and others and are able to develop and maintain healthy relationships. With these skills, children and adolescents are more likely to engage in sexual behaviours that are safe and appropriate.

103. Sexual and reproductive health needs to be promoted as an important component of healthy living, with the recognition that all people, including girls, boys and adolescents, have the right to access information, education and services required to protect their overall health. Canada will support the development of guidelines for sexual health education, including age and stage guidelines, which highlight sexual and reproductive developmental milestones across the lifespan, facilitate discussion about healthy sexuality and can be of benefit to parents, teachers and health care providers in their respective roles with Canada's youth. The goals of sexual health education should be to help children and adolescents understand their sexuality and guide them toward healthy relationships and eventually the joy of desired parenthood. It should also help protect them from unintended pregnancy, HIV/STIs, sexual coercion and sexual dysfunction. Effective sexual health education needs to be broadly-based, community-supported and involve the participation of the educational, medical, public health, social welfare and legal systems.

104. Canada will support research, policies and programs related to sexual and reproductive health that are inclusive and culturally sensitive and recognize the positive role that parents can play with respect to their own children. There will be a continuous effort to understand the potential individual and societal impact of sexually transmitted infections and to develop and promote policies that minimize marginalization or stigmatisation of affected populations. Comprehensive, evidence based, accessible programs and services will continue to be promoted to ensure that children and adolescents have the knowledge and skills they need to achieve sexual health and avoid negative outcomes. Specific attention will be paid to research on assisted human reproduction and genetics so that this knowledge can

be made available to young people as they grow up and begin to think about having children.

(g) Tobacco, alcohol, drug abuse and addictions

105. The use of tobacco, the abuse of alcohol and drugs, and the presence of addictions put the health and well-being of children, adolescents and families at risk in the home and in the community. In order to make stable, long-term progress, we must address underlying issues such as violence, anxiety, emotional and mental health problems, and social exclusion that bring children and adolescents to embark on self-destructive activities.

106. We in Canada will strive to prevent the use of tobacco, the consumption of alcohol and other drugs by all children and adolescents, and reduce the harm for those who use them or who are exposed to them through, for example, second-hand smoke. We will draw increased attention to the impact of using tobacco or consuming alcohol and other drugs during pregnancy. We already know that Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in children is largely preventable. We will ensure that children and adolescents have opportunities to develop appropriate knowledge and decision-making skills to assist them in living healthy lives.

107. We will support legislation and other measures that help prevent the abuse of drugs and other substances by children and adolescents. We will research the nature of both physical and psychological addictions in girls and boys and adolescents, including the growing addiction to gambling. We will enhance treatment and rehabilitation for those affected by substance abuse. We will work toward reducing exposure to second-hand smoke in public and private spaces, and actively develop, promote and support healthy, substance-free images

and behaviours in advertising and in the media. We, together and in consultation with children and adolescents, will strive to create a healthy, addiction-free Canada.

(h) The health of Aboriginal children

108. A number of adverse health issues disproportionately impact Aboriginal children and their families including poor nutrition, paediatric type 2 diabetes, maternal and infant morbidity, pregnancies in young adolescents, injuries, unsafe drinking water, exposure to environmental contaminants, FASD, physical disabilities, physical and mental health problems, suicide, tobacco, alcohol and substance abuse.

109. Partners will continue to work together to address the gap in health status between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. We will work toward improving access to health services and delivering them in a more seamless way, through better integration of programs at all levels. We will engage Aboriginal communities in their design and delivery so that they combine the best of both western and indigenous traditions. We will recognize the importance of traditional/country foods and traditional medicine to the health and well-being of Aboriginal peoples. We will also improve supports for parents, families and communities, increasing awareness of healthy pregnancies, as well as child health.

(i) Paediatric health care and research

110. In spite of our best efforts many children in Canada still fall seriously ill, sustain injuries or are medically fragile from birth or as the result of serious trauma. These children need specialized health care. While the delivery of health services is a provincial-territorial responsibility, all

of us have a duty to ensure that the child's right to health is respected in a holistic manner and that paediatric health care is child- and family-friendly. Children have the right to be involved to the extent possible in medical decisions that affect them and they should be encouraged to be active in their own treatment in age-appropriate ways. The settings in which children find themselves should be specifically designed for them. The growing body of research on children's health should take into account that even young children have the right to be heard. We must also strive to ensure that drug trials always include paediatric populations and that paediatric research priorities are included in calls for proposals by research agencies interested in health.

(j) Health services in official language minority communities

111. There are many Canadians, including boys, girls and adolescents, who live in official language minority communities where they have limited access to health care services in their own language. We recognize the need to ensure that there are enough health care providers who can work in minority language communities and that providers have access to the information and training needed to serve patients in their own language.

International priorities

(k) Food security, nutrition, water and sanitation

112. Access to adequate food and nutrition is essential for children's optimal growth and development. Canada is committed to working with the international community in pursuit of the *Millennium Development Goal* (MDG) of halving by 2015 the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. This will involve working with the

international community to eliminate micro-nutrient deficiencies; to reduce malnutrition among children under five years of age, with special attention to children under two years of age; to reduce the rate of low birth weight; to reduce the proportion of households without access to hygienic sanitation facilities and affordable and safe drinking water; and to promote breastfeeding.

113. We will help meet these goals by supporting initiatives, including in response to emergency situations, related to household food security, rural development through agriculture, micro-nutrient supplementation, breastfeeding, nutrition, and water and sanitation services. We will give special attention to the gender dimensions of these issues, recognizing the crucial role women play both as gatekeepers to household food security and nutrition and as major contributors to the household economy.

(l) Preventing and controlling communicable diseases

114. Through inadequate access to clean water and sanitation, lack of vaccinations and poor access to medical care, children die needlessly around the world of communicable diseases, particularly in developing countries. Over two million children under five die every year from diarrheal diseases, the majority of whom could be saved by the simple administration of oral rehydration salts. Another two million children under five die from pneumonia, most of whom could be saved with vaccinations and antibiotics. The biggest challenge that exists for protecting the lives of these children is giving them access to many of these simple, cost-effective interventions.

115. Canada will work with the international community toward the MDG goal of reducing the infant and under-five mortality rate by two-thirds by 2015. Canada will work to achieve this in collaboration

with the international community by playing an active role in donor/partner networks and other international health initiatives and by supporting global initiatives to address communicable diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, polio, and measles. Canada will continue to work with international health initiatives such as: the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization; the Canadian International Immunization Initiative, in partnership with the WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); the global Stop Tuberculosis Initiative; Roll Back Malaria; and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Other strategies could include: increasing the coverage of existing cost-effective interventions for tuberculosis; insecticide-treated nets for malaria; intermittent, presumptive malaria treatment for pregnant women; childhood vaccinations; and prompt treatment for children suffering from malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea. We will encourage integrated, community-based treatment and prevention programs for communicable diseases, as well as the integration of tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment within the context of sustainable primary health-care programs.

(m) HIV/AIDS

116. Of the estimated 40 million people in the world living with HIV/AIDS, 2.5 million are children under the age of 15. The loss of parents and the breakdown of family and community structures are also taking a toll on the healthy development of countless numbers of children. To date more than 14 million children under the age of 15 have been orphaned by AIDS and this number is expected to nearly double to 25 million by 2010. Many children are leaving school early to care for sick parents, to tend to younger siblings or to work to provide for their families. Only now are the psychosocial impact and the economic costs beginning to be measured.

117. Canada will work to meet the goals laid out in the Millennium Declaration as well as the Declaration of Commitment that was agreed upon at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, including to reduce the proportion of HIV/AIDS infected infants and the impact on children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. Canada will work with the international community to implement a comprehensive and balanced approach to prevention and care, treatment and support, including full access to sexual and reproductive health services. Strategies must be human rights focused, integrate gender equality and fully respect and support the special intervention needs of vulnerable groups, including orphans, injection drug users and commercial sex workers. Special attention must be given to supporting communities in dealing with orphans and vulnerable children including providing full access to education and social services.

(n) Sexual and reproductive health

118. Throughout the world, limited access to high quality sexual and reproductive health care and services continues to result in unacceptably high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies, the results of which can be devastating for women and adolescent girls, as well as for their children, for their communities and for future generations. Addressing these challenges is essential to the fulfilment of the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health, as well as to the achievement of global poverty reduction, sustainable development and international targets including the MDGs. Canada, believing that sexual and reproductive health is critical to the overall health, survival and well-being of all individuals, is internationally recognized as a strong advocate for promoting

and protecting the human right to the highest attainable standard of health, including sexual and reproductive health.

119. Canada will work with the international community to address sexual and reproductive health within the framework of the MDGs, as well as the goals agreed upon at the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 and their five-year reviews. At these events [ICPD and Beijing] the international community agreed that all women and men, boys and girls, have the right to the highest attainable standard of health, with access to high quality sexual and reproductive health care and services, including family planning information and sexual and reproductive education. Although the ICPD goal of ensuring universal access through primary health care to a full range of sexual and reproductive health services is not specifically included in the MDGs, sexual and reproductive health is essential for achieving the MDGs of: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

120. Canada will support achievement of these goals through strategies that include but are not limited to placing priority on programs that improve coverage of family planning services and maternal and child health through a multi-disciplinary approach that focuses on underlying social factors (such as employment, income, education and the status of women). Comprehensive strategies for this will include: promoting prevention, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections; prevention of injury and violence against girls (including female genital mutilation); and targeting both school-based and out-of-school girls, boys and adolescents.

Canada will implement these strategies with partners at the national, regional and international level, as well as take an active role in international reproductive health networks, particularly those relevant to child and adolescent health. This will include continued support to key multilateral organizations (such as the United Nations Population Fund, WHO, PAHO and UNICEF) for integrated and collaborative reproductive health research, policy and program delivery.

3. Protecting from Harm

121. Most children in Canada live in families and communities that nurture and protect them. A significant number, however, experience abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect in their immediate surroundings. Some adolescents, who become street-involved or homeless, risk further harm. When children are maltreated, or at significant risk of being maltreated, state authorities have an obligation to intervene to protect them and/or assist them, preserving the family unit whenever it is safe and reasonably possible.

122. We are committed to protecting children from harm in Canada and abroad, and will continue to support approaches that promote effective prevention and intervention, recognizing the underlying factors that can contribute to situations of abuse, violence, exploitation or neglect. We will respond effectively to these situations, supporting victims, ensuring appropriate consequences to perpetrators, and fostering understanding and capacity among children, young people, families, communities and society to take action. We will work together to create safe and caring environments that are free from discrimination and are sensitive to gender and culture, which celebrate diversity and promote the healthy development of children.

Priorities for action

(a) Child maltreatment

123. Child maltreatment, which includes physical and sexual abuse, emotional maltreatment and neglect, continues to be a significant issue in Canada. Child maltreatment poses serious immediate and long-term risks to the health and development of children. Neglect is the most common reason for child welfare investigations, followed by physical abuse, emotional maltreatment and sexual abuse. The factors contributing to these conditions are complex and multi-layered. Neglect is frequently associated with conditions of poverty. Child maltreatment is more likely to occur in situations where other forms of family violence are present; exposure to family violence is increasingly being recognized as a form of child maltreatment.

124. We in Canada are committed to the protection of children from all forms of child maltreatment. We will continue to support strategies in the home, in out-of-home care, and in our communities that promote the healthy development and well-being of children, and assist those who have been maltreated. We will ensure appropriate criminal justice responses to incidents of abuse and neglect. We recognize the ongoing concerns of specific populations such as children from Aboriginal, ethnocultural, remote and rural communities, children with disabilities, children in out-of-home care, and children who are street-involved and homeless.

125. Partners will seek to understand the complex and multi-faceted nature of child maltreatment, and will identify and promote approaches that include improved prevention and intervention, coordination and collaboration, national data collection, research and policy development, promotion of community awareness and

community capacity building. We will work toward improved early intervention and enforcement in our communities. We will strive to provide treatment services to abusers, and will continue to provide education and information about child maltreatment in support of professional training. We will also continue to promote positive parenting, including non-physical means of discipline. An awareness and understanding of the rights of the child has the power to reduce child maltreatment by increasing respect for the child's dignity and physical integrity.

(b) Out-of-home care and adoption

126. Parents, and legal guardians where designated, have the primary responsibility for the care, nurture, supervision and protection of their children. However, when families are unable to care for or keep children safe, the state has the responsibility to intervene. Since the early 1990s, the number of children coming into the care of the state has been increasing.

127. Child and family welfare services are mandated within provincial and territorial statutes. These mandated services may be provided by agencies of the province or territory or by contracted service providers. Community-based organizations also provide a wide range of child welfare services, and play a key role in supporting children and their families. Partners are committed to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all children. We will work toward a multi-sectoral and culturally sensitive system of safeguards for protecting children, including but not limited to family supports, out-of-home care options and adoption.

128. We in Canada recognize that an effective child welfare system incorporates legislation, policies and programs, based on principles that have been developed to ensure that the well-being, rights and best interests of the child are identified and protected. We will continue to consider a broad range of placement and reunification options, and strive to make timely decisions that emphasize permanency and continuity to meet the needs of each individual child. We will respect the resiliency of children and their capacity to form secure attachments. We will continue to recommend supports for those in out-of-home care, as well as adequate assistance for their transition to adulthood. We will also continue to identify effective child welfare research and prevention programs to inform policy and practice.

129. For many couples and individuals wishing to raise families, adoption is a desirable option both for them and for the children they adopt. We must always ensure that the best interests of the child is a paramount consideration in adoptions and, where appropriate and available, the child will be able to obtain information relating to his or her genetic background if medically necessary. We must also ensure that adoptions involving a change in country of residence are in the best interest of the child and comply with the *Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption* (the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption) and all other applicable provincial/territorial/federal laws.

(c) Violence, bullying and other forms of intimidation

130. The issue of violence, bullying and other forms of intimidation in schools, communities and society at large is receiving increasing attention. These types of aggression can take many forms, including physical, verbal, social and sexual, and have negative consequences

both for those who are victimized and those who are perpetrators. Sometimes, specific populations of children are targeted such as members of ethnocultural groups and those who are or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered. All children have a right to feel and to be safe.

131. We in Canada are committed to taking action to prevent violence, bullying and other forms of intimidation, whether committed by individuals or gangs, and to intervene effectively when they occur. By increasing knowledge and awareness we will bring attention to the damage such actions causes children. We will also promote and model a culture of respect for all children and strive to create environments that are safe, responsive and free from discrimination.

132. We will identify effective school- and community-based prevention and intervention strategies, working toward changing the climate in which aggressive actions take place so that the norms of behaviour become more respectful of both children and adults. We will also promote diversity and increase understanding about social inclusion. Our strategies will be multi-dimensional, addressing the concerns of the individuals who are victimized, as well as those who perpetrate aggression or witness it.

(d) Youth justice

133. Although the overall crime rate for young people has been declining since the early 1990s, young people's involvement in crime and the way Canadians respond to it remain significant issues in Canada. The majority of crimes committed by young people are non-violent property offences. Only a small number of young people are involved in serious and repeat crimes, such as drug trafficking or aggravated assault.

134. We in Canada will continue efforts to prevent the involvement of young people in crime. We will strive to create an equitable youth justice system that protects society at large while upholding the rights of young people who commit crimes, and the rights of children who witness or are victimized by these crimes. In response to the evolving capacities of young people, we will strive to provide clear and coherent principles for decision-making around youth justice issues. We will work toward improved sentencing and timely interventions for young people to ensure that responses are both meaningful and sufficient for the offences committed. We will encourage alternative processes, like conferences, that allow youth greater voice in shaping decisions that affect them and their peers. We will strive to reduce the high rate of incarceration and support the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of young people within their communities.

135. Partners will work collaboratively to improve the youth justice system. We in Canada will continue to support crime prevention through social development to prevent and reduce crime and victimization among young people, addressing the underlying factors, and promoting school- and community-based initiatives. We will make a clear distinction between serious and violent offences and less serious offences, and aim to address less serious cases effectively outside of the formal court process.

136. In our efforts to respond to young people who commit crimes, we will link the seriousness of the intervention with the seriousness of the response, emphasizing timely intervention, meaningful consequences, restorative approaches, cultural relevance and community involvement. We will use the least restrictive controls possible to maintain the safety of communities while reconciling offenders with communities and victims. We will provide supports to children

who witness or are victims of crime by creating safe, responsive environments to facilitate their testimony, and by helping them cope with the impacts of their experience. Where possible we will share our youth justice model with other countries through technical assistance.

(e) Violent and harmful content in the media

137. The relationship of today's children with the media is particularly complex. Exposure to mass media (i.e., television, movies, video and computer games, the Internet, music lyrics and music videos, newspapers, magazines, books, advertising, etc) presents both risks and benefits for children. Concerns about media include the impact of media violence and stereotyping, especially racial and gender stereotyping, on children's behaviour; the fact that certain types of sexual conduct as well as the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs are normalized, even made glamorous; advertising that is targeted; commercial exploitation of young children through the Internet; and problems related to the excessive amount of time children spend with the electronic media.

138. In order to be functional in the world today, children need to be media aware and have the critical thinking skills to read and understand all the messages that are informing, educating, entertaining and selling to them everyday. Parents and teachers in Canada have a crucial role to play in helping children sort through the positive and negative aspects of media in our society. Children whose parents monitor their TV watching and who discuss media content and images with them are more likely to be aware of the risks associated with the media and less vulnerable to manipulation. Research suggests that many children in Canada would welcome more adult involvement.

139. We in Canada will strive to reduce the amount of violent, sexualized and harmful representations in the media to which children are exposed and build understanding in the public of their potential impact on children's healthy development. We will continue to develop ratings for violent, sexualized and harmful content in the media, and work toward improved enforcement of age restrictions in the sale of media products. With partners, we will develop monitoring guidelines and resources addressing the effects of violent, sexualized and harmful images on children, and promote and encourage alternative, positive forms of entertainment. We will work toward improved protection against all forms of exploitation on the Internet. We will encourage media responsibility and support media awareness and consumer literacy.

(f) Immigrant, refugee and asylum seeking children

140. Canada provides protection to and welcomes thousands of people every year. We in Canada are committed to building a stronger nation by fostering welcoming communities for immigrant children and their families who choose to make Canada home, and by offering a safe environment to people of any age who are displaced and persecuted, including those seeking asylum and refugees selected abroad.

141. We in Canada all have a part to play in welcoming newcomers into our communities. As a fundamental expression of our humanitarian ideals and values of inclusion, respect for diversity and tolerance, we will continue to provide support and protection to immigrant and refugee children and their families, and facilitate the reunification of refugee children with their family members in Canada.

142. We will continue to work with partners both domestically and internationally to assist children and families who have been granted Canada's protection, through resettlement to Canada and other assistance after arrival. Persons seeking Canada's protection from within Canada are entitled to a fair and impartial determination process in Canada and to other support as appropriate while they are in this country. We will strive to develop a consistent national policy for the reception and care of separated children who have made refugee protection claims in Canada. We will continue to provide settlement, adaptation and integration assistance to immigrant children and their families who have chosen to come to Canada. Together, we will work to ensure that all newcomers who are granted the right to remain in this country, including children, are able to participate fully in Canadian life.

(g) Sexual exploitation and trafficking

143. We in Canada recognize that all forms of sexual exploitation of children, including within the family, for commercial purposes or for consideration, must be effectively criminalized and penalized both within Canada and abroad. The Canadian *Criminal Code* identifies as criminal activities various forms of child sexual exploitation. These include child pornography, child sexual exploitation on the Internet, child prostitution, and child sex tourism. Canada has introduced a human trafficking offence with very significant penalties in its *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* to deter international trafficking in children. Canada has signed the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography*, ratified the *International Labour Organization Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the*

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (ILO C182 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention) (including the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography, for pornographic performance, for illicit activities, work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children), and ratified the *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* and its accompanying protocols, one of which is the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*. Canada was active in the negotiation of these instruments and we will encourage other countries to ratify them so that the international benefits arising from their implementation may be realized.

144. We are committed to working in Canada and with the international community to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation, including sexual abuse, trafficking and abduction for sexual purposes. We will continue to support research on the issue in Canada, its consequences domestically and abroad, and its underlying risk factors, such as poverty, social exclusion and gender inequality. Partners will identify and promote improved prevention strategies that address the vulnerability of children, client demand and the predatory nature of the exploiters, as well as strategies to facilitate the recovery and social integration of child victims. The sexual exploitation of children is child abuse. We will raise awareness in Canada about the abusive nature, the illegality and the harmful consequences of child sexual exploitation and the trafficking of children, and support similar efforts internationally, including in developing countries and countries in transition. Internationally, we will focus on the sexual exploitation of children in areas of armed conflict and address the responsibility of both combatants and peacekeepers.

145. In addition, we will strive to enhance information-sharing mechanisms, both internationally and domestically. We will continue to work with our international partners to develop and implement strategies to prevent the criminal use of information technologies for the purposes of child pornography, the luring of children for sexual purposes, child prostitution, child sex tourism and the sale of children. Canada will continue to implement all international agreements to which it is a party, as well as review and propose legislative amendments as necessary to further protect and facilitate the testimony of children and other vulnerable persons, and witnesses, and increase penalties for offences against children.

146. Canada will work to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement and border officials to identify and prevent trafficking into Canada. We will provide gender and age-sensitive process and training support to officials so that they are better able to protect trafficking victims and effectively prosecute their traffickers. We will develop integrated policing models for law enforcement to assist with investigations of child pornography. We will also continue to work with international partners to develop and implement an international database of child pornography images to assist with victim identification and suspect location.

International priorities

(h) Combating child labour

147. Canada considers exploitative child labour a violation of the rights of the child. According to article 32 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, child labour can be harmful to the child's health, or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, depending on the child's sex, age, and developmental status, as well as the

type and amount of work being performed. The worst forms of child labour include forced, bonded or slave labour, sexual exploitation, child soldiering, the use of children for illicit activities such as drug trafficking, and work likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children. Non-harmful, age-appropriate work that does not interfere with a child's education can be beneficial to girls and boys by giving them an income, a sense of accomplishment, and work-related and social skills that will be of use to them in their future lives.

148. Canada is committed to preventing the exploitation of boys and girls and will continue to work to prevent and end harmful child labour. Efforts will also be made to support working children to gain the knowledge, tools and opportunities they need to achieve their potential and to participate as full members of their communities.

149. Canada will help address the issue of harmful child labour through support to poverty alleviation, investments in primary education, and increasing the productive capacity of families, especially women. Canada will address child labour in the context of trade liberalization, through labour cooperation agreements, technical assistance and cooperative activities. Canada will also help meet immediate needs of girls and boys who work by supporting their access to education and health care, as well as their participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of interventions meant to benefit them. Canadian companies can help address the issue of child labour through adherence to voluntary corporate social responsibility standards, such as those set out in the *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises* in their operations abroad and through the development of specific codes of conduct and management commitments against the use of child labour. Finally, Canadians can promote international awareness of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and *and the ILO C 182 Worst Forms of Child Labour.*

150. For those under the age of 18 in Canada, we will work with partners to ensure that conditions and hours of work are appropriate, and that children are well protected.

(i) Protecting marginalized groups

151. The children most marginalized by society often experience violations of their rights through exploitation, abuse and discrimination. Marginalized children include, among others, those affected by armed conflict, exploited child labourers, sexually exploited children, children orphaned by AIDS, street-involved children, children with disabilities, children facing discrimination because of their ethnic or religious identity, race, gender or sexual orientation, and children in conflict with the law or in institutional care.

152. Canada will strive to promote and support special protection measures for children internationally, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition, in order for them to attain the full enjoyment of their human rights. We will continue to contribute to the development and implementation of international standards to address the abuse, exploitation and discrimination faced by marginalized boys and girls. We will continue to raise awareness of child protection issues and advocate in Canada and in relevant international fora for special protection measures for these children. We will support research about the reality of these children's lives. As well, we will work toward building the capacity of individuals and organizations working with these children through training, development and disseminating resources, and networking. We will promote a holistic approach, founded upon the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* that respects children as agents of social transformation.

(j) Protection from armed conflict

153. Internationally, millions of children are killed, injured, displaced and scarred both physically and psychologically by the brutality of armed conflict. The protection of children in such circumstances, including the protection of their security and rights, is a key component of Canada's foreign policy and of our international assistance and programming. Internationally, Canada is recognized as a leader with regard to children's rights and children in armed conflict. This includes Canada's strong representation in multilateral and regional organizations, constructive dialogues with other states and programming on the ground.

154. Canada will continue to make the protection of war-affected children and their communities (including refugee and internally displaced children) and the protection of their security and rights a foreign policy priority. These efforts will be informed by an understanding of howgirls and boys experience armed conflict differently, and the importance of involving conflict-affected children in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes undertaken for their benefit. In our work to protect children from the impact of armed conflict, we will take action to stop the flow of small arms to forces that use them to abuse children. We will also ensure Canada's compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights law (such as the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts*). We will continue to work actively in support of resolutions and reports from the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly that call on the United Nations and Member States to take effective action in incorporating the rights and well-being of children in armed conflict in their policies and programs. Beyond these fora, we will continue to

encourage regional and country-specific approaches to better protect conflict-affected boys and girls. We will also encourage agencies involved in humanitarian, peace-building and development work to integrate the rights of the child into their programming.

155. We will continue to support integrated efforts to address their needs including on issues related to: the prevention of military recruitment of girls and boys, and their demobilization and reintegration; the special protection needs of refugee and displaced children (including advocating for enhancing their access to legal and physical protection); access to education, vocational training and conflict resolution training; family reunification; health care, including sexual and reproductive health; psycho-social rehabilitation; sexual and gender-based violence; support for the inclusion of children in peace processes and agreements; and improving the sensitivity to the needs of children reintegrating and returning to post-conflict situations.

4. Promoting Education and Learning

156. The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* sets out the following aims for education: Education should be directed toward developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential, at the same time as fostering a respect for his or her parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she originates, and for civilizations different from his or her own. Education should also prepare children for responsible life in a free society, in a spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin. Finally, education should develop an understanding of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as respect for the natural environment.

157. The aims of education throughout Canada are fully consistent with the principles of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. As a society we place a high value on the importance of education for all children. While formal schooling is crucial and can be received in a variety of settings (such as in independent schools or at home), education and learning also refers to the broad range of life experiences and learning processes that enable children, individually and collectively, to develop their personalities, talents and abilities, so as to live a full and satisfying life within society. Parents, community-based organizations, child care services and schools, family resource centres, volunteers and community members all play a role in providing learning opportunities.

Priorities for action

(a) Quality learning

158. While a child's first educator is the family, as children grow, education and learning take place in other environments, including at school, in the community and among peers. These environments contribute to the development of the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities, moral development and spiritual well-being. Focusing on the quality of the learning environment and on teaching and learning processes and programs is crucial to promoting quality education and learning.

159. We in Canada will continue to ensure quality learning for children regardless of where they live and the particular challenges they face. This will involve learning environments that engage young people in their learning while adapting to their learning styles, unique cultures and needs. We will continue to foster and promote learning environments that are safe, accessible, supportive and

caring, and based on the principles of respect, diversity and inclusion. Working together, we will build on individual, family and community assets, strengthening their capacities to provide quality-learning opportunities. We will also continue to incorporate new learning methods that involve technological resources and build media awareness, while emphasizing the importance of arts education from early childhood. Promoting quality learning through various means, we can continue to ensure that all children develop the knowledge and skills they need to become full participants in the larger society.

(b) Arts and culture

160. Research has demonstrated that participation in artistic and cultural activities is a vital part of healthy child development. Children need opportunities for self-expression and play, and thrive when they get them. Through participation in the creative processes in a variety of media, including technology, children experience alternative ways of knowing and develop their imaginations, ideas, observational capacities and feelings. The benefits of creative activities throughout childhood have been shown to include improved academic performance, improved health and social skills, improved higher order thinking skills and reduced involvement in crime.

161. Artistic and cultural activities also play a key role in engaging children in communities. Small neighbourhood art centres can provide important entry points to arts programs. Children in Aboriginal communities that are rural or remote respond enthusiastically to such programs when facilities are available. Spaces designed for older children who are living in conditions of risk, including street and homeless children, can support their transition back into the community. As the cultural sector comprises one quarter of the

Canadian workplace, art and creative centres can also play a key role in assisting with résumé and portfolio building to improve access to education and future employment.

162. We will increase awareness of the benefits of the arts and of cultural activities for children. We will increase opportunities for community-based involvement in artistic and cultural programs. We will encourage artists and arts organizations to continue to play an important role in promoting the value of the arts and developing relationships with children, parents, families and teachers in formal and informal settings, as well as performance and exhibition venues. Our strategies will be aimed at ensuring that programs are holistic in their approach and socially inclusive. We will encourage the training and capacity building of creative artists and facilitators, as well as collaboration, networking and sharing of resources among all levels of government, arts councils and arts community organizations, cultural and heritage institutions and professional artists.

(c) Human rights education and global citizenship

163. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are core Canadian values. These rights, as defined in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, affect not only children but also those who are responsible for them. We are committed to educating Canadians about how these rights and freedoms affect their lives. By helping children and other partners to understand the nature of human rights, we will increase their awareness of the rights and responsibilities of our shared citizenship and of the problems created by discrimination and intolerance.

164. We will continue to ensure that people in Canada have opportunities to gain awareness and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. By disseminating and promoting education on the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, we will strive to make the principles and provisions of the convention more widely known. By using approaches that promote mutual respect, we will work to inform and engage children and youth, teachers, parents and other who work with children, and audiences who may not normally have easy access to human rights materials. Further, we will strive to use rights-based and child-development perspectives in policy and programming, both nationally and internationally.

165. Human rights education also supports peace education, which entails both peace-building and training in conflict resolution. We will also strive to enhance children's understanding of key global issues and empower them to take informed action as global citizens by enabling them to connect with children in other parts of the world through the Internet and other media, as well as, personally, through international youth exchanges. We will increase awareness of international development among children and develop appropriate educational tools.

(d) Canadian culture and national identity

166. All children in Canada have the right to feel proud of their citizenship and national identity. Whether citizens by birth or by choice, children must be afforded every opportunity to learn about the history and geography of Canada, our common culture and values, how we govern ourselves, and the responsibilities of citizenship. We will encourage an understanding of all the cultures that make up Canadian society, including the roles played by the English, French and the

Aboriginal peoples in the history of our nation, and the contributions made by immigrants coming to Canada from all parts of the globe. We will encourage an understanding of the role that Aboriginal peoples play in enriching Canadian society and the difficulties that have been imposed on them. We will help children to acquire skills and competencies in both official languages as well as assist Aboriginal peoples to preserve and learn their native languages.

167. We will encourage our national cultural institutions whose mandates are to promote Canadian history, culture and values – the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Société Radio-Canada, the National Film Board, the Library and Archives of Canada, the Canadian Council for the Arts, the National Arts Centre and the network of national museums and art galleries – to continue to expand their outreach to children. We will support the development of learning materials in the field of Canadian Studies particularly in content areas that are considered to be underdeveloped or neglected. We will support programs that promote the understanding of the democratic process and elections and encourage citizen engagement. We will continue to help minority official language communities pass on their language to their young children and support the production, distribution and promotion of Canadian content that reflects our linguistic duality and cultural diversity.

(e) Environmental learning and sustainability

168. Despite the many successes of the environmental movement, much more needs to be done if our society is to understand the complexities of environmental conditions. Children in Canada are concerned about the quality of the air they breathe, the water they drink, safe food production, the recycling of waste, threats to biodiversity, climate

change and the integrity of our ecosystems. They are looking for opportunities to learn about and engage in ensuring environmental sustainability both for Canada and the world.

169. We in Canada will support the *United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* beginning January 1, 2005, that resulted from the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. We will acknowledge the concern and energy that children have for environmental issues and recognize their achievements. We will continue to provide children with opportunities to engage and contribute to improving the quality of the environment through activities such as the Youth Roundtable on the Environment. We will produce up-to-date educational materials to increase environmental learning and sustainability. Our efforts will support greater community awareness and capacity, social engagement and corporate action.

(f) Literacy

170. Literacy is much more than reading, writing and numeracy. It is the ability to understand, use and communicate information in all kinds of daily activities. Literacy touches virtually every aspect of our lives, but studies show that many people in Canada do not read or write well enough to participate fully in the workplace or in the community. Literacy is strongly linked to scholastic achievement among children, and to adults' success in finding and keeping employment. Improved literacy skills can influence individual growth and development, as well as contribute to economic well-being.

171. We in Canada are committed to improving the literacy skills of children, young people, and families through the continued promotion of literacy and lifelong learning as essential to successful participation in all aspects of life. Supporting community partners, we will continue

to be actively involved in improving literacy skills through raising public awareness, sharing information, developing learning materials and advancing research to better understand the needs and challenges of creating a fully literate population. We will strive to ensure that families have the literacy skills to increase their knowledge, achieve their goals and contribute to the growth of the country.

(g) Trained and professional educators

172. The teachers and early childhood educators who encourage, enable and inspire children in Canada to learn play a tremendous role not only in the academic achievements of children, but also in creating the foundation for learning, which students carry throughout life. Professional, well-trained and caring teachers and early childhood educators are essential to the quality of the education children receive.

173. It is necessary for partners to work together to continue to ensure that teachers and early childhood educators are supported, valued and respected for the important professional role they play. We will work to understand the challenges educators face and improve our knowledge of the learning needs of children through better awareness and improved research. We will continue to recognize the efforts of outstanding teachers in all disciplines and early childhood educators who provide children with the tools to become good citizens, to develop and grow as individuals, and to contribute to Canada's growth, prosperity and well-being.

(h) Education for All: An international priority

174. Basic education is crucial to improving the quality of life of the individual and significantly contributes to human, social and economic development. It is an essential element of sustainable development

and poverty reduction. Indeed, without education, national and international poverty reduction efforts will likely falter, leaving inequalities between and within countries.

175. Canada will continue to work with the international community to see that all children receive a basic education. Our efforts will be focused primarily through the global initiative Education for All, and three of the initiative's goals. First, we will strive to ensure that all children have access to, and are able to complete primary education that is free, compulsory and of good quality. Our efforts will include a special emphasis on those who are often marginalized, including indigenous children, children from minority groups, children in conflict areas, working children, and children with special needs and disabilities. Second, we will support progress toward gender equality, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality, by eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education. Finally, we will work to improve the quality of basic education, especially in literacy, numeracy, and life skills for learners of all age groups. We can help meet these goals by supporting various initiatives that aim to improve access to quality education, for example, through integrating strategies for gender equality, improving the quality of classroom instruction, promoting respect for human rights through education, promoting the use of information communication technologies as a tool to achieve better access, equality and quality in education, and heightening cooperation and coordination between education partners.

C. Building Momentum

A Call to Action

176. Supporting families and strengthening communities, promoting healthy lives, protecting from harm, and promoting education and learning are all attainable goals in Canada as long as we can rally the will and the resources.

177. While these goals will be so much harder to achieve in developing countries or countries in transition we must not lose heart. There is still a good deal that Canada can do. We can contribute through our foreign policy objectives of promoting global prosperity as well as security and urging respect for the international agreements to which Canada is a party especially the *Convention on the Rights of the Child.* Our Official Development Assistance will continue to be directed to support sustainable development in developing countries, in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world.

178. In Canada we have already made substantial progress toward the promotion of children's rights and well-being. But, conscious that children in Canada cannot thrive in isolation from the children of the world, we also reaffirm our commitment to the broader goals of *A World Fit for Children.*

Partnerships and Participation

179. No government or individual acting alone can accomplish the goals of either *A Canada Fit for Children* or *A World Fit for Children.* As all sectors of society including governments, the private and voluntary sectors, as well as boys and girls have significant roles to play, we

must now come together to pursue our common task of ensuring the rights and well-being of children in Canada and throughout the world.

180. And so, we call upon the following partners to participate in the implementation of the Plan of Action:

(1) **Children, including adolescents**. The energy and creativity of children must be nurtured and engaged so that they can take an active part in shaping their environment, their societies, the world they live in now and the world they will inherit.

(2) **Parents and families**. As they have the primary responsibility for the well-being of their children, they need to be supported in their role. The role of grandparents and Elders who have wisdom and experience to share should be recognized and valued.

(3) **Governments at all levels**. Cooperation and continual dialogue among different orders and levels of government are essential.

(4) **Parliamentarians, members of provincial legislatures, members of Aboriginal governments and municipal councillors**. They will be key to the implementation of the Plan of Action through adopting necessary legislation, designing regulations, and raising awareness about the priority of children's issues.

(5) **Civil society**. The voluntary sector, community-based organizations, youth serving agencies and professional associations, as well as youth driven organizations, are knowledgeable advocates for children and their rights, and have a key role in promoting and creating environments conducive to their health and well-being.

(6) **The private sector.** Business organizations have a unique contribution to make by adopting and adhering to practices that ensure family-friendly work environments and by demonstrating social responsibility.

(7) **Religious, spiritual and cultural leaders, and Aboriginal Elders.** Guardians of the spirit, we need their wisdom and inspiration.

(8) **Academics and researchers.** We need them to enrich our knowledge of child development, to help us understand the complex interaction of children and society, and to inform best practices.

(9) **Teachers, early childhood educators, child and youth care workers, foster parents, social workers, coaches, police and correctional workers and others who work directly with children.** Since they are in day-to-day contact with children, their influence is vast.

(10) **Health care providers.** Paediatricians, family physicians, specialists, nurses and other professionals play a critically important role in promoting healthy lives for children.

(11) **The media and their organizations.** We need them to help us raise awareness about the importance of children and families and the challenges they may confront. We also need them to be attentive to their influence on children.

(12) **Artists, writers and musicians.** Because they understand the role of the imagination, they can enhance the capacity of children to make of the world they know, the world they dream of.

181. In order to respond to our international challenges, we will continue to work with regional and international organizations, particularly those in the United Nations family, the Bretton Woods institutions and other multilateral agencies. Among our most important partners are international non-governmental organizations as well as Canadian ones focused on international development that engage on the ground with local communities and work so effectively for and with children.

Keeping on Track

182. At the United Nations Special Session on Children, it was the explicit aim of Canada to successfully integrate language into *A World Fit for Children* that reinforced the importance of the active participation of children. The Government of Canada also ensured that, wherever possible, the language of the declaration and plan of action referred to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, especially those of the most vulnerable children.

183. In the spirit of these efforts, we in Canada reiterate our commitment to the fulfilment of the goals and aims of *A World Fit for Children*, and of the goals set out in this National Plan of Action entitled *A Canada Fit for Children*, secure in the knowledge that, as with the 1990 World Summit for Children, progressive implementation will bring us closer to a world that is fit for children, and for us all.

184. *A Canada Fit for Children* represents a roadmap to guide Canada's collective efforts for and with children; a call to action that identifies strategies to which everyone in Canada can contribute. We are committed to taking the necessary measures to implement Canada's national plan of action for children and to reporting the results to the United Nations. We will continue to work with a wide range of partners and encourage their participation in activities that will

further the implementation of this plan. All partners will need to chart their own paths using the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* as a guide. By regularly reviewing our respective actions, by keeping abreast of major policies and activities related to children, by collecting data, and by preparing reports, Canada will be able to assess progress toward our goals at the same time as we enhance the implementation of our obligations under the *Convention*. We acknowledge that progress will take time, but our commitment will be sustained and we will persevere because we owe to our children the best we have to give.

V. GOVERNMENT OF CANADA INVESTMENTS IN AND COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN

185. Over the last decade, the Government of Canada has made a number of substantial investments in and commitments to children in Canada and in the world. The examples given below, with their signposts and milestones, are intended to guide us on our way forward.

A. **For Canada's Children**: To support the three key conditions that have been identified as enabling healthy child development: adequate income for families with children; effective parenting within strong and cohesive families; and supportive and inclusive communities.

1. Signpost ➡ Toward an adequate income for families with children

Milestones	*Investments*
The **Canada Child Tax Benefit** (CCTB) is a tax-free monthly payment and is the main federal instrument for the provision of financial assistance for families with children. The CCTB has two main elements: A base benefit for low- and middle-income families that includes a supplement for children under the age of seven. Currently, approximately 3.2 million Canadian families with 5.7 million children benefit from the CCTB base benefit, which is over 80 percent of families.	2000: The CCTB was fully indexed to the cost of inflation in 2000. As of July 2000, the maximum annual CCTB benefit (including the NCB supplement) for a first child was $2,081, $1,875 for the second child, and $1,875 for each additional child. Total CCTB benefits provided to Canadian families with children were $7 billion for the 2000 CCTB program year. A commitment was made to add 2.6 billion a year to the CCTB by 2004. ⬇

Milestones	*Investments*
The National Child Benefit (NCB) supplement, which provides additional assistance to low-income families with children. The NCB supplement is provided to 40 percent of Canadian families with children. In 2002-03, about 1.5 million families with 2.7 million children received the NCBS. The NCB supplement is the federal contribution to the **National Child Benefit** (NCB) initiative, under which federal, provincial and territorial governments act together to reduce child poverty while promoting parents' attachment to the workforce. Introduced in 1998, the NCB is a partnership among federal, provincial and territorial governments (excluding Quebec) and includes a First Nations component, which provides income support, as well as benefits and services, to low-income families with children.	2003: As of July 2003, the maximum annual CCTB benefit (including the NCB supplement) was $2,632 for a first child, $2,423 for the second child, and $2,427 for each additional child. Total CCTB benefits provided to Canadian families were $8.4 billion for the 2003 CCTB program year. The 2003 Budget announced a commitment to provide a $965-million-per-year increase in CCTB by 2007. ⬇ 2007: As of July 2007, the maximum annual CCTB benefit (including the NCB supplement) is projected to reach $3,243 for a first child, $3,016 for the second child, and $3,020 for each additional child. Total CCTB benefits provided to Canadian families with children will be over $10 billion a year for the 2007 CCTB program year.

Milestones	*Investments*
As their contribution to the NCB initiative, provinces, territories and First Nations also invest in supports to low-income families with children in five key areas: child benefits and earned income supplements, early childhood services and children-at-risk services, child/day care, supplementary health benefits, and other benefits and services.	
The **Child Disability Benefit** (CDB), introduced in 2003 as a supplement to the CCTB, targets benefits to children with a severe and prolonged mental or physical impairment in low- and modest-income families.	2004: For the 2004 program year, the maximum CDB benefit will be $1,653, which will be provided to eligible families with net incomes under $35,000. Modest-income families with net incomes between $35,000 and approximately $50,000 will receive partial benefits. It is estimated that the CDB will provide $50 million to about 40,000 families annually.

2. Signpost ➡ Toward effective parenting within strong and cohesive families

Milestones	*Investments*
Under the **Federal/Provincial/ Territorial Early Childhood Development (ECD) Agreement**, announced in September 2000, the Government of Canada is helping to support provincial/ territorial investments in early childhood development programs and services.	2001-02: A Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) investment of $300 million enhanced provincial and territorial early childhood development programs and services. ⬇ 2002-03: A further investment of $400 million was transferred to the provinces and territories. ⬇ 2003-04: A further investment of $500 million was transferred to the provinces and territories. ⬇ 2004-05: A further investment of $500 million will be transferred to the provinces and territories. ⬇ 2005-06: A further investment or $500 million will be transferred to the provinces and territories.

Milestones	*Investments*
Through the **Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care**, announced in March 2003, the Government of Canada is supporting provincial and territorial investments in early learning and child care. The 2004 Budget announced that the Government of Canada will provide additional funding under the existing Multilateral Framework in 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. As a complement to the Multilateral Framework, the 2003 Budget announced $35 million over five years for early learning and child care for Aboriginal children, primarily those living on reserve. This investment was enhanced by a further $10 million announced in the 2004 Budget.	2003-04: An initial investment of $25 million was transferred through the CHST to provinces and territories. ⬇ 2004-06: Funding transferred through the CHST to provinces and territories to increase by $150 million. ⬇ 2008: With increased investments announced in the 2004 Budget total investment will now amount to $1.05 billion over five years.

Milestones	*Investments*
The **Employment Insurance Maternity and Parental Benefits** provide temporary income replacement for up to one year while a new parent stays home with their newborn or newly adopted child. Due to the enhancement of the benefits, from 2000-02 the number of maternity claims increased by almost 10 percent and the number of parental claims increased by 18 percent. For fathers, that increase was nearly 80 percent.	2000-01: An investment of nearly $752 million supported approximately 176,000 maternity claims; and an investment of $502 million supported 178,000 parental claims. ⬇ 2002-03: An investment of $859 million supported 193,000 maternity claims; and an investment of $1.9 billion supported 196,000 parental claims.
The **Compassionate Family Care Benefit** introduced in 2004 provides up to eight weeks of temporary income support, under the Employment Insurance program, for those who care for gravely ill family members.	2004-05: It is estimated that $221 million will be invested under this initiative each year.

Milestones	*Investments*
The **First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative** supports culturally appropriate Aboriginal child care programming, including relevant cultural and language components, in First Nations and Inuit communities.	2000: An investment of $41 million supported more than 7,000 children in 389 communities. ⬇ 2002-03: Under the Federal Strategy on Early Childhood Development for First Nations and other Aboriginal children, annual investments were increased to $50 million, to improve quality of existing spaces, and create new spaces.
Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve is an early intervention program for First Nations children (ages 0 to 6) and their families living on reserve.	2000-01: An investment of $25 million supported programs and services for 7,000 children through the Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve program; and $22.5 million supported programs and services for 3,200 children through the AHSUNC. ⬇

Milestones	*Investments*
Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) is an early intervention program for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children and their parents living in urban centres and large northern communities.	2002: Under the Federal Strategy on Early Childhood Development for First Nations and other Aboriginal children, annual investments were enhanced to $46.5 million for Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve, and $35.1 million for Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities.
The **Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program** (CPNP) is a community-based initiative that helps vulnerable pregnant women including those living in poverty, pregnant teens and women living in isolation or with poor access to services. The **CPNP First Nations and Inuit Component** is a community-based initiative that provides support to First Nations women living on reserve and Inuit women.	2000-01: An investment of $27.3 million supported programs and services for 34,000 women in 301 projects; and an investment of $14.2 million supported programs and services for an estimated 7,500 First Nations and Inuit children in 6,000 families in about 550 projects. ⬇ 2002-03: An investment of $31 million supported programs and services for 44,000 women in 320 projects; and an investment of $14.2 million supported programs and services for First Nations and Inuit children.

Milestones	*Investments*
The **Community Action Program for Children** (CAPC) funds community-based coalitions that establish programs and deliver services to meet the developmental needs of children under six living in conditions of risk.	2000-01: An investment of $59.5 million supported programs and services for 57,038 children and 47,234 parents in 409 sites. ⬇ 2002-03: An investment of $59.5 million supported programs and services for 66,468 children and 52,136 parents in an estimated 408 sites.
The **Child-Centred Family Justice Strategy** was announced in 2002 to help parents focus on the needs of their children following separation and divorce.	2003-08: An investment of $163 million over five years includes $68 million of funding to provinces and territories and non-governmental organizations in support of family justice services (such as mediation and parent education); $47.3 M for continued expansion of Unified Family Courts; and $47.7 M for implementation of reforms and federal activities.

Milestones	*Investments*
The **Family Violence Initiative and National Clearinghouse on Family Violence** is led by Health Canada which coordinates 12 federal departments whose long-term goal is to reduce the occurrence of family violence in Canada through awareness and research.	An investment of $7 million is made annually to the Family Violence Initiative.
***Criminal Code* amendments** were introduced relating to child protection:	2002: New child exploitation provisions target the luring and exploitation of children for sexual purposes through the internet; and amends the sex tourism legislation that makes it easier to prosecute Canadians who sexually assault children while abroad. ⬇ 2004: New legislation has been tabled in the House of Common, which aims to safeguard children and other vulnerable persons from sexual exploitation, abuse and neglect through strengthening child pornography provisions, creating a new category of sexual exploitation, increasing maximum sentences, and facilitating the testimony of child victims and witnesses.

Milestones	*Investments*
The **National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth** (NLSCY) is a long-term study of Canadian children, which tracks their development and well-being from birth to early adulthood. The survey collects information about how a child's family, friends, schools and community influence his or her physical, behavioural and learning development. **Understanding the Early Years** (UEY) is a national initiative that provides communities with information to enable them to make informed decisions about best policies and most appropriate programs for families with young children.	2000-01: Investments in the NLSCY and UEY totalled $7.7 million. ⬇ 2002-03: Investments in the NLSCY and UEY totalled $8.5 million. ⬇ 2004: The 2004 Budget announced $14 million over two years towards a significant extension of UEY from 12 to 100 communities.

Milestones	*Investments*
Under the **Social Development Partnerships Program**, early childhood learning and care investments promote the generation, dissemination and application of knowledge, innovative solutions and best practices as they apply to children and families; foster collaborations, partnerships and networks; and strengthen the capacity of organizations in the social non-profit sector.	2000-01: Investments in early childhood learning and care projects were $5.2 million. ⬇ 2002-03: Investments in early childhood learning and care projects were $5.2 million.

3. Signpost ➡ Toward supportive and inclusive communities	
Milestones	*Investments*
The **National Crime Prevention Strategy** (NCPS) was launched in 1998 with an emphasis on children, youth, women and Aboriginal peoples. The NCPS focuses on crime prevention through social development and community capacity building.	2000-01: An investment of $13.8 million funded proposals that target children and youth. ⬇ 2002-03: An investment of $18.2 million funded proposals that arget children and youth.
As a component of the NCPS, the **RCMP National Youth Strategy** focuses on community-based early intervention efforts that address the root causes of crime and victimization. Additionally, the RCMP National Aboriginal Policing Services Branch has developed an Aboriginal youth suicide prevention program.	

Milestones	*Investments*
The **Youth Justice Renewal Initiative**, launched in 1998, addresses prevention, meaningful consequences for youth crime, and rehabilitation and reintegration, to help youth return to their communities.	2000-05: An investment of $950 million over five years was negotiated with the provinces and territories to support the implementation of the new youth justice legislation, including an additional $115 million in bridge funding.
In 2003, the ***Youth Criminal Justice Act*** came into force replacing the *Young Offenders Act*. Federal funding supports the development of programs required to implement the "intensive rehabilitative custody and supervision" sentencing option of the *Act*.	2002: A federal investment of $48 million over five years was negotiated with the provinces and territories to support the implementation of the intensive rehabilitative custody and supervision sentencing option of the Act.

Milestones	*Investments*
In partnership with provinces and territories, **Canada's Social housing programs** provide assistance to some 639,000 social housing units that benefit lower-income Canadians, including families with children, youth, people with disabilities, seniors and Aboriginal people.	2001: Federal funding of $680 million over five years was allocated to the **Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI)** through cost-sharing agreements with the provinces and territories to increase the supply of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households, including families with children. Matching contributions from provinces, territories and others could increase this investment to over $1.36 billion.

Milestones	*Investments*
In 1999, the Government of Canada launched the three-year **National Homelessness Initiative** (NHI) to help prevent and alleviate homelessness in Canada. This included the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) that provides funding for local community groups to offer supportive services and facilities for the homeless. Funding for a range of existing federal programs was increased to address the needs of particularly vulnerable and/or over-represented groups within the homeless population, namely youth-at-risk, Aboriginal people and victims of violence. A number of programs, including the **Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP)**, administered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), received additional funding to support housing repairs on units occupied by low-income households. The RRAP program	2002-03: Estimated CMHC expenditures directed to off-reserve and on-reserve Aboriginal peoples was $275.8 million. Under the On-Reserve Program, CHMC committed 997 new units on reserve with a subsidy over the next 35 years estimated at $118 million; spent approximately $105.5 million primarily to provide subsidy and renovation assistance for households on reserve; and housing renovation programs supported the repair of 1,375 houses. ⬇ 2003: A new investment of $320 million over five years is allocated to the AHI; an investment of $128 a year (for a total of $384 million over three years) extends the RRAP; and an investment of $135 million a year (for a total of $405 million over three years) funds the SCPI. ⬇

Milestones	*Investments*
for Persons with Disabilities offers financial assistance to improve the accessibility of dwellings occupied or intended for occupancy by low-income persons with disabilities, including families with disabled children. CMHC's **Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP)** assists in repairing, rehabilitating and improving existing shelters and to assist in the acquisition or construction of new shelters and second stage housing for women, children and youth who are victims of family violence. The Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative facilitates the transfer of surplus federal properties to communities. Over the years, about 8,627 beds have been created, 399 food banks and soup kitchens have been enhanced or expanded, and 653 shelters have been improved. Another 50 surplus properties were transferred for low-income housing creating 212 affordable units.	2007-08: Federal investments in the AHI will amount to $1 billion.

Milestones	*Investments*
Under the **On-Reserve Housing Program**, approximately 1,000 units are constructed yearly, with a current portfolio of about 23,000 units.	
Children's health and the environment, as a priority, was reinforced by the establishment of the Office of the Children's Environmental Health within Health Canada to better protect children from environmental threats.	2000-01: An investment of $100,000 funded programming in the Office of the Children's Environmental Health. ⬇ 2002-03: An investment of $54.5 million was allocated to improve access to newer environmentally-friendly pesticides. Health Canada was mandated to consider the special vulnerabilities of children.

Milestones	*Investments*
The 2000 **Voluntary Sector Initiative** reinforces the Government of Canada's commitment to examine new ways of working together and strengthening the relationship between the voluntary sector and the federal government. The 2001 Accord between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector spells out the values, principles and commitments that will underlie their future relationship.	2001-05: An investment of $94.6 million over five years is being allocated to the Voluntary Sector Initiative.
The **Official Languages Action Plan**, announced in 2003, focuses on minority language and second language education in both English- and French speaking communities. In 2003, 2.6 million children – half of those attending primary and secondary schools in Canada – are learning English or French as a second language. Some 324,000 are in French immersion classes; and 24 percent of high school graduates know both official languages.	2003-08: Total investment of $751.3 million is being allocated with the goal of doubling the number of high school graduates with working knowledge of both official languages.

Milestones	*Investments*
The **Aboriginal Language and Culture Centre** was announced in 2002 to help preserve, revitalize and promote the languages and culture of Aboriginal peoples, including Aboriginal children. This investment also supports the extension of the Aboriginal Languages Initiative. Currently, about 20 percent of Aboriginal peoples speak an indigenous language regularly. Three Aboriginal languages, Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibway, are thriving in Canada.	2003-14: An investment of $172.5 million is being allocated over 11 years.
Cadets Program and Junior Canadian Rangers Program, administered by the Department of National Defence, is the largest federally sponsored youth program for young Canadians ages 12 to 18 who learn valuable life and work skills such as teamwork, leadership and citizenship.	2003-04: an annual investment of $173 million supports 63,000 Canadian youth in more than 1,200 urban, rural and remote or isolated communities in Canada.

B. For the World's Children
In support of stronger international standards and the Millennium Development Goals.

4. Signpost ➡ Toward stronger international standards related to children
Since 2000, Canada has negotiated, signed, ratified or adopted the following international conventions, statutes, protocols and declarations that directly reference children:

2000	*Winnipeg International Conference on War-Affected Children*
	International Labour Organization Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour
	Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
	Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts
	The Dakar Framework of Action on Education for All
2001	*Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography*
	Yokohama Second World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
	Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

2002	*Protocol (to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime) to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*
	Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10)
	The following declarations and conventions that will have a direct impact on children are currently in development internationally:
	United Nations Draft Convention on the Protection and the Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities
	United Nations Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
	Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children

5. Signpost ➡ Toward the Millennium Development Goals

At the Millennium Summit held in September 2000, all United Nations Member States adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) pledging to reduce poverty and improve the lives of humankind by 2015 as measured against baseline year, 1990.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	• Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day. • Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education	• Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	• Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.
4. Reduce child mortality	• Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five.
5. Improve maternal health	• Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio.

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	• Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS. • Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	Goal includes: • Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water.
8. Develop a global partnership for development	Goal includes: • In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth.

Milestones	*Investments*
International Assistance Canada provides international assistance primarily through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), whose mandate is to support sustainable development in order to reduce poverty and contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world. CIDA's accountability framework includes the MDGs, the pursuit of which supports the well-being and rights of children.	2000-01: The International Assistance Envelope (IAE) totals $2.5 billion. ⬇ 2003-04: The IAE increased by 8 percent for a total of $2.9 billion with the aim of doubling international assistance by 2010 (of which at least half is earmarked for Africa). This would result in an increase of the Official Development Assistance/Gross National Income ratio from 0.27 percent in 2002 to around 0.35 percent by 2010. ⬇

Milestones	*Investments*
	2004-05: The IAE increased again by 8% for a total of approximately 3.1 billion. ⬇ 2005-06: The 2004 Budget announced another 8% increase in the IAE, which is expected to result in a total of approximately $3.3 billion.
CIDA's Social Development Framework In 2000, CIDA unveiled the *Social Development Priorities: A Framework for Action*, to strengthen social development programming in developing countries.	2000-05: An investment of $2.8 billion over five years was allocated. CIDA's new framework targets four key areas: (i) health and nutrition for a total of $1.2 billion; (ii) HIV/AIDS for a total of $270 million; (iii) basic education for a total of $555 million; and (iv) child protection for a total of $122 million, including a $2 million research fund. Gender equality is an integral part of all these priorities. ⬇

Milestones	*Investments*
(i) Health and Nutrition In support of health and nutrition related MDG targets, CIDA works with many partners (including international organizations, UN agencies and governments) to improve health policies, programs and systems in areas such as nutrition, sexual and reproductive health, communicable and non-communicable diseases, and water and sanitation; and also to ensure these policies and programs are particularly responsive to the needs of women, girls and boys. **(ii) HIV/AIDS** In support of HIV/AIDS-related MDG targets, CIDA works with many partners (including international organizations and United Nations agencies and governments) to provide support to locally-led HIV/AIDS strategies including care, treatment and prevention, and support for HIV/AIDS orphans.	2000: Annual spending targets are $152 million for Health and Nutrition; $20 million for HIV/AIDS; $41 million for Basic Education; and $9 million for Child Protection. ⬇ 2001: Annual spending targets are $182 million for Health and Nutrition; $22 million for HIV/AIDS; $49 million for Basic Education; and $10 million for Child Protection. ⬇ 2002: Annual spending targets are $203 million for Health and Nutrition; $36 million for HIV/AIDS; $82 million for Basic Education; and $18 million for Child Protection. ⬇ 2003: Annual spending targets are $248 million for Health and Nutrition; $62 million for HIV/AIDS; $110 million for Basic Education; and $27 million for Child Protection. ⬇

Milestones	*Investments*
(iii) Basic Education To meet Education for All goals, CIDA's programs focus on two MDG targets (universal primary education and gender equality) to ensure the equal access to quality education for boys and girls. **(iv) Child Protection** CIDA has committed to increasing its investment in children most vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and discrimination — children who require special measures to support the fulfillment of their rights, with a strategic focus on war-affected children and child labourers.	2004: Annual spending targets are $275 million for Health and Nutrition; $70 million for HIV/AIDS; $150 million for Basic Education; and $31 million for Child Protection. ⬇ 2005: Annual spending targets are $305 million for Health and Nutrition; $80 million for HIV/AIDS; $36 million for Child Protection; $164 million for Basic Education.
In 2004, Canada tabled legislation changes to the *Patent Act and Food and Drug Act* that will enable developing and least developing countries to access compulsory licences for generic versions of pharmaceutical products under patent in Canada.	

Milestones	*Investments*
New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Canada established the Canada Fund for Africa as part of Canada's support for the NEPAD and the G8 Africa Plan adopted at the June 2002 Kananaskis G8 Summit.	2002: Commits $500 million to the Canada Fund for Africa (as part of Canada's commitment of $6 billion to Africa's development over the next five years). This includes the *Africa-Canada Youth Programme*, a $30 million package over four years, which provides assistance to HIV/AIDS affected children and youth, and war-affected children; and provides support for Canadian-African youth exchanges focused on environmental issues. ⬇ 2003: An additional commitment of up to $100 million over five years will strengthen African-led strategies and programs for the care, treatment, support and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Milestones	*Investments*
Debt Relief and Market Access for Developing Countries Over the years, Canada has forgiven outstanding development assistance debt to the world's poorest countries. For example, Canada placed a moratorium on debt service payments from 11 reforming Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPCs) under the Canadian Debt Initiative in 2001. Canada has also committed to ensuring that developing countries benefit from trade when it signed the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Doha Development Agenda in 2001.	2000: Canada has forgiven a total of 1.3 billion in outstanding development debt. ⬇ 2003: Canada's total contribution to multilateral HIPC efforts through the HIPC Trust Fund, involving both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, was over $315 million. Canada extends duty and quota free access to imports from 48 Least Developed Counties (of which 34 are in Africa) except for supply-managed agricultural products (dairy, poultry and eggs).